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The gospel in Ezekiel

THE
GOSPEL IN EZEKIEL

ILLUSTRATED IN

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

BY

THOMAS GUTHRIE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "PLEAS FOR RAGGED SCHOOLS," ETC.

TWELFTH THOUSAND.

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TO THE
REV. WILLIAM HANNA, LL.D.

To you, my dear Sir, I dedicate these Discourses—the substance of which was preached to our Congregation—not so much as an expression of my high admiration of the genius and talents which you have consecrated to the cause of our common Lord, as a mark of the warm affection which I cherish for you, and of the kind, cordial, and most happy intercourse, which we have enjoyed since our union as colleagues and pastors of the same flock.

THOMAS GUTHRIE.

EDINBURGH, 1ST DECEMBER 1855.



DISCOURSES.



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THE GOSPEL IN EZEKIEL.

THE MESSENGER.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man—
EZEKIEL xxxvi. 16, 17.

HAVING scattered over an open field the bones of the human body, bring an anatomist to the scene. Conduct him to the valley where Ezekiel stood with his eye on the skulls and dismembered skeletons of an unburied host. Observe the man of science how he fits bone to bone and part to part, till from those scattered members he constructs a framework, which, apart from our horror at the eyeless sockets and fleshless form, appears perfectly, divinely beautiful. In hands which have the patience to collect, and the skill to arrange these materials, how perfectly they fit! bone to bone, and joint to joint, till the whole figure rises to the polished dome, and the dumb skeleton seems to say, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

Now as with these parts of the human frame, so is it with the doctrines of the Gospel, in so far as they are

intelligible to our limited understandings. From the pages of Scripture over which they are scattered let these doctrines be collected ; arrange them in systematic order ; how beautifully they fit ! doctrine to doctrine, duty to duty ; till—connected with each other, all “members one of another”—they rise into a form of perfect symmetry, presenting that very system which, with minor differences but substantial unity, is embodied in the confessions, creeds, and catechisms of Evangelical Christendom. I have said so far as they are intelligible to us ; for it is ever to be borne in mind, that while the Gospel has shallows through which a child may wade to heaven, it has also deep, dark, unfathomed pools, which no eye can penetrate, and where the first step takes a giant beyond his depth.

There is a difference, which even childhood may discern, between the manner in which the doctrines and duties of the Gospel are set forth in the Word of God, and their more formal arrangement in our catechisms and confessions. They are scattered here and there over the face of Scripture, much as the plants of nature are distributed upon the surface of our globe. There, for example, we meet with nothing that corresponds to the formal order, systematic classification, and rectangular beds of a botanical garden ; on the contrary, the creations of the vegetable kingdom lie mingled in what, although beautiful, appears to be wild confusion. On the same moor, on the surface of the same meadow, the naturalist collects grasses of many forms—he finds both enamelled with flowers of every hue ; and in those primeval forests

which have been planted by the hand of God, and beneath whose silent and solemn shades man still walks in savage freedom, trees of every form and foliage stand side by side like brothers. With the Sabbath hills around us, far from the dust and din, the splendour and squalor of the city, we have sat on a rocky bank, to wonder at the varied and rich profusion with which God had clothed the scene. Nature, like Joseph, was dressed in a coat of many colours—lichens, grey, black, and yellow, clad the rock; the glossy ivy, like a child of ambition, had planted its foot on the crag, and, hanging on by a hundred arms, had climbed to its stormy summit; mosses, of hues surpassing all the colours of the loom, spread an elastic carpet around the gushing fountain; the wild thyme lent a bed to the weary, and its perfume to the air; heaths opened their blushing bosoms to the bee; the primrose, like modesty, looked out from its leafy shade; at the foot of the weathered stone the fern raised its plumes, and on its summit the fox-glove rang his beautiful bells; while the birch bent to kiss the stream, as it ran away laughing to hide itself in the lake below, or stretched out her arms to embrace the mountain ash and evergreen pine. By a slight exercise of fancy, in such a scene one could see Nature engaged in her adorations—we could hear her singing, “The earth is full of the glory of God.” “How manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty! in wisdom thou hast made them all.”

Now, although over the whole surface of our globe—as in that spot—plants of every form and family seem

confusedly scattered, amid this apparent disorder the eye of science discovers a perfect system in the floral kingdom ; and just as—although God has certainly scattered these forms over the face of nature without apparent arrangement—there is a botanical system, so there is as certainly a theological system, although its doctrines and duties are not classified in the Bible according to dogmatic rules. Does not this circumstance teach us that God intended his Word to be a subject of careful study as well as devout faith, and that man should find in its saving pages a field for the exercise of his highest faculties? We are commanded to compare “spiritual things with spiritual;” we are to “search the Scriptures,” to dig for their treasures, and dive for the pearls. Hence the prayer of David, “Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.”

While the trees and flowers that clothe the fields of nature are scattered without apparent order over the wide surface of the earth, there are mountain regions lying within the tropics, where, in the course of a single day, the traveller finds every vegetable form peculiar to every line of latitude between the equator and the poles, and all these laid out in regular arrangement. Leaving the palms which cover the mountain’s feet, he ascends into the regions of the olive ; from these he rises to a more temperate climate, where the vine festoons the trees, or trails its limbs along the naked rock ; still ascending, he next reaches a belt of oaks and chestnuts ; from that he passes to heights shaggy with the hardy

pine ; by and by, he enters a region where trees are dwarfed into bushes ; rising above that, his foot presses a carpet of lowly mosses ; till, climbing the rocks where only the lichen lives, he leaves all life beneath him ; and now, shivering in the cold, panting in the thin air for breath, he stands on those dreary elevations, where eternal winter sits on a throne of snow, and, waving her icy sceptre, says to vegetation, " Hither shalt thou come and no further." Like some such lofty mountain of the tropics, there are portions of the Divine Word, where, in a space also of limited extent—within the short compass of a chapter, or even part of it—the more prominent doctrines of salvation are brought into juxtaposition, and arranged side by side, almost in systematic order.

This chapter offers to our attention one of the most remarkable of these ; and in illustration of that remark I observe ;—

- I. That this portion of Scripture, extending onwards from the 16th verse, presents an epitome or outline of the Gospel.

Its details, with their minute and varied beauties, are here, so to speak, in shade ; but the grand truths of redemption stand boldly up, much as we have seen from sea the summits of a mountain range, or the lofty headlands of a dim and distant coast. We are aware that the Mosaic economy, and many of God's dealings with his ancient people, were but the shadows of good

things to come ; and that, when the things are come—as come they certainly are—you may meet us on the very threshold with this question, Why look at the shadow when you possess the substance? However valued in his absence the portrait of a son may be, what mother, when her boy is folded in her arms, and she has the living face to gaze on, turns to the cold picture? What artist studies a landscape in sombre twilight, when he may see it in the blaze of day? True—true at least in general. Yet such study has its advantages. It not seldom happens that a portrait brings to view some shade of expression which we had not previously observed in the face of the veritable man ; and when some magnificent form of architecture, or the serried ridges and rocky peaks of a mountain, have stood up between us and the lingering lights of day, we have found, that although the minor beauties of fluted columns or frowning crags were lost in the shades of evening, yet, drawn in sharp and clear outline against an evening sky, the effect of the whole was even more impressive than when eyed in the glare of day.

Thus it may be well, occasionally, at least, to examine the Gospel in the broad shadows and strongly defined outlines of an old economy ; and through God's government of his ancient people, to study the motives, the nature, and the ends of his dealings with ourselves. In this way the passage before us has peculiar claims upon our attention. Addressed in the first instance to the Jews, and applicable also, in the first instance, to their condition, it presents a remarkable summary of

Gospel doctrines in a form, which approaches at least to systematic order.

In the 17th verse, we have man sinning—"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings."

In the 18th verse, we have man suffering—"Wherefore, I poured my fury upon them."

In the 21st verse, man appears an object of mercy—"But I had pity."

In the 22d verse, man is an object of free mercy—mercy without merit—"I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel."

In the 24th verse, man's salvation is resolved on—"I will bring you into your own land."

In the 25th verse, man is justified—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

In the 26th and 27th verses, man is renewed and sanctified—"A new heart also I will give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

In the 28th verse, man is restored to the place and privileges which he forfeited by his sins—"Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." "This land that was desolate, is become like the garden of the Lord." We have our security for these blessings in the assurance of the 36th verse—"I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it;" and we are directed to the means of obtain-

ing them in the declaration of the 37th verse—"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." •

Such is the wide and interesting field that lies before us. But before entering upon it, let us consider—

II. The party who is commissioned to deliver God's message.

Who is the ambassador of Heaven? What is he? An angel? No; but a man. "Son of man," says the Lord. In the 1st verse of this chapter he says—"Son of man, prophesy unto the mountains." In the 3d verse of the following one he asks—"Son of man, can these bones live?" Again, in the 9th verse of the same chapter, he says—"Son of man, prophesy unto the wind." And in the 11th verse, still addressing him by the same title, he tells the prophet—"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel." By the title of "Son of man" Ezekiel is so often addressed, "Son of man," "Son of man," is so constantly sounded forth both in his ears and ours, that it forces on our attention this remarkable fact, that God deals with man through the instrumentality of man, by men communicating his will to men. The rain, descending from heaven, falls upon the surface of our earth, percolates through the porous soil, and flowing along rocky fissures or veins of sand, is conveyed below ground to the fountain whence it springs. Now, although out of the earth, that water is not "of the earth, earthy." The world's deepest well owes its

treasures to the skies. So was it with the revealed will of God. It flowed along human channels, yet its origin was more than celestial—it was divine. Those waters at whose pure and perennial springs Faith drinks and lives, while conveyed to man along earthly channels, have their source far away—in the throne of God. Their fountainhead is the Godhead. No doubt, God could have used other instrumentality. He might have commissioned angels on his errands of mercy, and spoken at all times, as he did sometimes, by seraph lips. With rare exceptions, however, his ambassadors were men. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, by whom in days of old he revealed his will—those inspired missionaries of heaven—were all sons of man.

Now in this arrangement observe, in the first place:—

The kindness of God to man. Who has read the story of Moses without feeling that it was a very great kindness, both to him and his mother, that he had her bosom to lie on, and that God in his providence so arranged matters that the mother of the child was hired to be its nurse? Who else would have treated the out-cast infant so lovingly and kindly? And I hold it a singular kindness to man that he is selected to be the instrument of saving his fellow-men. The God of salvation, the author and finisher of our faith, might have arranged it otherwise. “Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel?” The field is the world. And as the husbandman ploughs his fields and sows his seed in spring by the same hands that bind the sheaves of autumn, God might have sent those angels to sow the Gospel,

who shall descend at judgment to reap the harvest. But although these blessed and benevolent spirits, who are sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation, take a lively interest in the work—although watching from on high the progress of a Redeemer's cause, they rejoice in each new jewel that adds lustre to his crown, and in every new province that is won for his kingdom; and although there be more joy even in heaven than on earth when man is saved—a higher joy among these angels “over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons”—yet theirs is little more than the pleasure of spectators. Theirs is the joy of those who, occupying the shore, or crowded on its heights, with eager eyes and beating heart follow the bold swimmer's movements, and watching his head as it rises and sinks among the waves, see him near the drowning child, and pluck from the billow its half-drowned prey; and, still trembling lest strength should fail him, look on with anxious hearts, till, buffeting his way back, he reaches the strand, and amid their shouts and sympathies restores her boy to the arms of a fainting mother.

To man, however, in salvation, it is given to share, not a spectator's but a Saviour's joy; and with his lips at least to taste the joys of that cup for which Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame. If that parent is happy who has snatched a beloved child from the flood or fire, and the child, saved, and thus twice given him, becomes doubly dear, what happiness in purity or permanence to be compared with his, who is a

labourer with God in saving souls? Let me invite you to share in pleasures—the sweetest out of heaven. This is a privilege and a pleasure free to all. It is one which kings cannot command, and yet beggars may enjoy; which wealth cannot purchase, and yet poverty may possess; one also (and what more could be said of it?) which enhances and intensifies the joy of heaven. While every saint shall have one heaven, some shall have more. Those who have helped to fill its mansions shall possess many heavens in one; and in proportion to the number they have brought to Christ, shall their crowns shine with jewels, and their cup flow with joys—joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which entereth not into the heart of man to conceive.

In this arrangement I observe again—

The honour conferred on man. Did Moses occupy a noble position when he stood aloft upon a rock amid the dying Israelites, and there, the central figure of the camp, on whom all eyes were turned, he raised high the serpent, to look at which was life? Nobler his attitude, much holier his office, who, with his foot on a dying world, lifts up the cross—exalts “Jesus Christ and him crucified”—that, whosoever looketh and believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. Give me the bleeding Saviour, make me the instrument of converting a single soul, and I grudge not Moses his “piece of brass;” nor envy him the honour of saving a thousand lives, all now quenched in death. Great honour to the memory of the mighty men who swept like a hurricane through the camp of the Philistines,

and cleaving their way through a crowd of foes, drew the water of Bethlehem for their king; yet, rather than be reckoned among David's mighty men, it would content me to be one of Christ's humblest servants, and hold the cup of life to a pauper's lips. All honour to the deathless prophet who rode up to the gate of heaven in a chariot of fire; but nobler still his departure, who leaves spiritual sons behind him to weep by the mantle of his flesh, and cry, as in faith they follow his ascending spirit, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" What dignities does this world offer? what glittering stars, what jewelled honours flash on her swelling breast, to be for one moment compared with those which they win on earth, and wear in heaven, who have turned souls from darkness to light—from the cursed power of Satan to the living, loving God? Each soul they have converted a gem in their crown, they that have turned many to righteousness shall shine with the brightness of the firmament—as the stars, for ever and ever.

How has the hope of this touched, as with glowing fire, the preacher's lips, sustained his sinking heart, held up prayer's weary hands, and proved an ample recompense for the scanty rewards which God's servants have received at the hands of men, for the penury which has embittered their life, and the hardships which have pressed on their lot! Their master—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—was rejected and despised of men, and, the disciple being no better than his Lord, they have shared in his sufferings. But,

fellow-sufferers, are they not fellow-labourers with Christ—his associates in the noblest work beneath the sun? Despised as the preacher of the Gospel may be by many, the apostle lifts him to an eminence from which he can contemplate this great world, with all its grandeur and glory, rolling away into dark oblivion. Viewed in the light of eternity, the church stands on a far loftier elevation than the palace, and the pulpit offers man a grander position than the throne of empires. To ministers of the Gospel belongs a high pre-eminence. They can say, "We are fellow-labourers with God;" and with such an associate—in such lofty company—devoting his life to so great a cause—no wonder that Paul calmly confronted a sceptic, sneering, scoffing world, and bravely said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

I am anxious that you should understand that the honours which I have spoken of are not reserved for pulpits. The youth who, finding rest and refreshment in Christian labours, teaches a Sabbath class; the mother, with her children grouped around her, sweet solemnity sitting on her face, and an open Bible resting on her knee; the friend who deals faithfully with another's soul; any man who kindly takes a poor sinner by the hand, and offering to guide, and urging him to go to the Saviour, says, "Come with us and we will do you good;" "arise, for we have seen the land, and behold it is very good;" these are ministers of the Gospel, and not less than its ordained pastors are fellow-labourers with God. Think not that this noblest work is our

exclusive privilege, nor stand back as if you had neither right nor call to set to your hand. What although you hold no rank in the church? No more does the private who wears neither stripes on his arm nor epaulettes on his shoulder; yet although a private, may he not bleed and die for the colours which it is not his privilege to carry? If it is not his business to train recruits, it is his business, and shall be his reward to enlist them. To that office, to recruit the ranks of the cross, the Gospel calls you—calls all—calls the meanest soldier in the army of the faith. “The Spirit and the bride say come.” But more than they should call. In the itinerant ministry which Jehoshaphat sent forth to teach in the cities of Judah there were princes from the court, as well as priests and Levites from the temple; and where sinners are perishing, where opportunity offers, where a door stands open, where the rule, “Let all things be done decently and in order,” is not outraged and violated—call it preaching if you choose, but in God’s name let hearers preach. Has God gifted any with power to speak for Christ? Then, with such high interests at stake, from forms which churches, not their head—man, not God, has established, we say, “Loose him and let him go.” “Let him that *heareth say come*, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

Thou art “a son of man:” you bear the prophet’s title, whatever otherwise you may be. Let me call you to the prophet’s office. The Master hath need—much need—daily need of you. Thousands, tens of thousands,

are dying in their sins. Although every minister were a flaming fire in the service of his God, every bishop were a Latimer, every reformer were a Knox, every preacher were a Whitefield, every missionary were a Martyn, the work is greater than ministers can accomplish; and if an indignant country will not suffer the interests of nations and the success of armies to be sacrificed to routine and forms of office, much less should these be tolerated where the interests of heaven and the cause of souls are at stake. I say therefore to every Christian, "The Master hath need" of you. Take a living, lively, loving interest in souls. Don't leave them to perish. Permanently and formally to instruct may be the duty of others, but to enlist is yours. "This honour have all his saints." And in attempting to engage you in the work of enlisting others, and of recruiting from out of your family, and friends, and neighbourhood, the armies of the faith, I call you to a work in which every man may bear his share, and one which offers honours as exalted as its pleasures are pure. It was no honour to Elijah to gird up his loins, and with the storm at his back to run abreast of the smoking horses of Ahab's chariot. Considering who the parties were, it had been meet, I think, that the king should have ran, and the prophet ridden. But to run by the chariot where Jesus sits, with a crown on his head, his bow in his hand, and his sword girded on his thigh; to employ our feet in offices that have employed angels' wings; to carry the news of mercy to a dying sinner; to gather crowds around the Saviour, that they may strew his royal path

with palms, and swell the song of Hosanna to the Son of David—for such a work a king might divest himself of robes and crown, and, ceasing to be a monarch, become a missionary.

Yes—he surely would not demean, but in the eyes of all good men rather dignify his office, who should descend from a throne where nobles bend the knee to him, to bend his own knee to God by a peasant's bed, or leave his palace for a cell, to watch, and weep, and pray with one whom crime had consigned to death. As yon planet worlds that roll and shine above us draw radiance from the sun around which they move, so surely shall they shine who spend and are spent in Jesus' service; they shall share his honours, and shine in his lustre. The man, however lowly his condition, who, some way between his cradle and the tomb, has converted even one soul to God, has not lived in vain, nor laboured for nought. He has achieved a great work. Let it content him to go down into the grave by men unpraised, by the world unknown. His works, if they have not preceded, shall follow him; and needing no tablet raised among mouldering bones and tombstones, he has a monument to his memory, where there are neither griefs nor graves, more enduring than brass or marble. Others may have filled the world with the breath of their name; he has helped to fill thrones in heaven. Others may have won an earthly renown; but he who, one himself, has sought to make others Christians—who, reaching the rock himself, draws another, a perishing child, brother, friend, neighbour, up—plucked from the

flood himself, pulls another out—who has leaped into the depths that he might rise with a pearl, and set it lustrous in Jesus' crown—he is the man who shall wear heaven's brightest honours—the man to whom, before all else, the Lord will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Weak in yourselves, but strong in God, go forth on this enterprise, the motto on your banner, the prayer of your heart, this wish of Brainerd, "Oh that I were a flaming fire in the service of my God!"

In this arrangement we see, lastly,

The wisdom of God. However highly gifted he may otherwise be, it is a valid objection to a preacher, that he does not feel what he says—that spoils more than his oratory. An obscure man rose up to address the French Convention. At the close of his oration, Mirabeau, the giant genius of the Revolution, turned round to his neighbour, and eagerly asked, Who is that? The other, who had been in no way interested by the address, wondered at Mirabeau's curiosity. Whereupon the latter said, That man will yet act a great part; and, asked to explain himself, added, He speaks as one who believes every word he says. Much of pulpit power under God depends on that—admits of that explanation, or one allied to it. They make others feel who feel themselves. How can he plead for souls who neither knows, nor feels the value of his own? How can he recommend a Saviour to others who himself despises and rejects him? Unhappy indeed, and doubly blind those whose leader is as blind as they are;

and unhappiest of all the preacher; while leader and led fall into the ditch, he falls foremost, undermost—his the heaviest condemnation, the deepest and most damned perdition. In possession of such a man—of one who has adopted the church as other men the law, or army, or navy, simply as a profession, and goes through the routine of its duties with the coldness of a mere official—the pulpit seems filled with the ghastly form of a skeleton, that in its cold and bony fingers holds a burning lamp.

It is true that a man may impart light to others who does not himself see the light. It is true that, like a concave speculum cut from a block of ice, which, concentrating the rays of the sun, kindles touchwood or explodes gunpowder, a preacher may set others on fire, when his own heart is cold as frost. It is true that he may stand like a stiff and lifeless finger-post pointing the way on a road, where he neither leads nor follows. God may thus in his sovereign merey bless others by one who is himself unblessed. Yet commonly it happens, that it is what comes from the heart of preachers that penetrates and affects the heart of hearers. Like a ball red hot from the cannon's mouth, he must burn himself who would set others on fire. Still, although the ministry of men who are themselves strangers to piety—although a Judas or Simon Magus in office—is an evil to which the church, in every age and under every form of government, stands more or less exposed, it were a poor refuge to seek exemption from such an evil in the ministry of angels. While man may not feel what he

preaches, angels could not. How could they? They never felt the stings of conscience; they never hung over hell's fiery gulf, and saw the narrow ledge they stood on crumbling away beneath their feet, and sent up to heaven the piercing cry, "Lord, save me, I perish;" tortured by remorse, they never felt the balm and power of Jesus' blood; pursued by a storm of wrath, they never flew to the Rock of Ages, and folded their wings in the sweet and safe serenity of its welcome clefts; in an agony for pardon, they never were ready to give a thousand worlds for one Christ; like a hart panting for the water brooks, they never thirsted for salvation; they never, as we have done, trode the valley of humiliation, and with bleeding feet and weeping eyes toiled along its flinty path; they never knew what it is, between them and their bright home in heaven, to see death's gloomy passage, and—more appalling still, a sight which makes the saint grasp his sword with a firmer hand, and lift up his shield on high—Satan posted there, and striding across the pass to dispute the way. Never knowing what it is to have been in bondage, having neither country nor kindred here, how could they preach like Paul? how could their bosoms burn and glow with this apostolic fire—"I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh!"

We have read the story of a traveller who stood one day beside the cages of some birds, that ruffled their sunny plumage on the wires, and struggled to be free. A way-worn and sun-browed man, like one returned

from foreign lands, he looked wistfully and sadly on these captives, till tears started in his eye. Turning round on their owner, he asked the price of one, paid it in strange gold, and opening the cage set the prisoner free; thus and thus he did with captive after captive, till every bird had flown away, soaring to the skies—singing on the wings of liberty. The crowd stared and stood amazed; they thought him mad, till to the question of their curiosity he replied, “I was once a captive; I know the sweets of liberty.” And so they who have experience of guilt, who have felt the serpent’s bite, the burning poison in their veins, who on the one hand have felt the sting of conscience, and on the other the peace of faith, the joys of hope, the love, the light, the liberty, the life, that are found in Jesus—they, not excepting heaven’s highest angels, are the fittest to preach a Saviour, to plead with man for God, or with God for man. Each Sabbath morning the gates of heaven might have been thrown open, and, sent by God on a mission worthy of seraphic fire, an angel might have lighted down upon this sanctuary, and, flying into the pulpit, when he had folded his wings, and veiled with them his glory, he might have taken up the wondrous theme of salvation and the cross. No angel, I believe, would leave heaven to be a king and fill a throne; and yet, I believe, were it God’s will, there is no angel there but would hold himself honoured to be a preacher and fill a pulpit. Another and very different messenger appears—a frail, dying, sinful man, one who is bone of your bone, and flesh of

your flesh; and if his humanity made Jesus the better Saviour, it makes his servants the better ambassadors, that they also are touched with a feeling of their people's infirmities, and are made in all points like as they are, and especially in this point, that we cannot add, "yet, without sin."

It is true that in us the instrument which God employs is a humble one—one in itself worthy neither of honour nor respect. The treasure is committed to earthen vessels; and these sometimes of rudest form and the coarsest clay. What of that? If the letter from a distant land brings good tidings of his son, what father quarrels with the meanness of the paper? While tears of joy bedew the page, does he so much as notice it? If the servant offers safe or savoury meat, a starving man enjoys it none the less although not served up on gold or porcelain. An ointment worthy of the Master's head, and exhaling odours that fill the house with fragrance, is as welcome from a sinner's as an angel's hand—from a vessel of the poorest earth as of the purest alabaster. Even so will you, if the people of God, receive and relish saving truth. Without worshipping him as an idol, and giving the honour to the servant which is due to the Master, you will respect the servant for his Master's sake.

Are some of you yet sinners—in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? Because we are ourselves sinners, and know what it is to have been captives, we are the fitter to address you. We know that you are not happy, nor can be happy in sin; its pleasures perish in the using,

and pain in the recollection ; and surely it is madness, the height of madness—for a man to stake eternity on the chances of a to-morrow, and purchase short-lived joys at the expense of eternal happiness. We know that out of Christ, as you have no safety, you can find no peace, no true peace. “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked ; ” “ they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest ; ” in storms a raging ocean, and in summer’s serenest day ebbing or flowing, and breaking its billows, like the world’s joys and happiness, on a beach of wrecks and withered weeds. Seek Christ, seek your peace through him, seek it in him ; and, saved yourself—yourself plucked from the wreck—oh, remember the perishing ; let the first breath and effort of your new life be spent for others. I give you an example ; and in the words spoken for a fellow-sufferer’s life, see what you should do for a fellow-sinner’s soul.

During a heavy storm off the coast of Spain, a dismasted merchantman was observed by a British frigate drifting before the gale. Every eye and glass were on her, and a canvas shelter on a deck almost level with the sea suggested the idea that there yet might be life on board. With all their faults, no men are more alive to humanity than our rough and hardy mariners ; and so the order instantly sounds to put the ship about, and presently a boat is lowered and starts with instructions to bear down upon the wreck. Away after that drifting hulk go these gallant men through the swell of a roaring sea ; they reach it ; they shout ; and now a strange object rolls from that canvas screen against the

lee shroud of a broken mast. · Hauled into the boat, it proves to be the trunk of a man, bent head and knees together, so dried and shrivelled as to be hardly felt within the ample clothes—so light that a mere boy lifted it on board. It is laid on the deck; in horror and pity the crew gather around it. These feelings suddenly change into astonishment. It shews signs of life; they draw nearer; it moves, and then mutters—mutters in a deep sepulchral voice—“*There is another man.*” Rescued himself, the first use the saved one made of speech was to seek to save another. Oh! learn that blessed lesson. Be daily practising it. And so long as in our homes, among our friends, in this wreck of a world which is drifting down to ruin, there lives an unconverted one, there is “*another man*,” let us go to that man and plead for Christ; go to Christ and plead for that man; the cry, “Lord, save me, I perish,” changed into one as welcome to a Saviour’s ear, “Lord save them, they perish.”

THE DEFILER.

Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings.—EZEK. xxxvi. 17.

THY holy cities are a wilderness ; Zion is a wilderness ; Jerusalem is a desolation. So low as this had the fortunes of Israel ebbed, when the words of my text were penned. Judah was in chains ; the people were captives in the hands of the heathen—exiles in the land of Babylon. Jerusalem lay in ruins ; the grass grew long and rank in her deserted streets ; an awful silence filled the temple ; the fox looked out of the window, and the foul satyr had her lair in the Holy of Holies. No plough turned a furrow in the field ; the vines grew wild and tangled on crumbling terraces ; nor cock crew, nor dog bayed, nor flock bleated, nor maid sang, nor shepherd piped, nor smoke curled up from homestead among the lonely hills. The land was desolate—almost utterly desolate. She now enjoyed what the love of pleasure and the greed of gain had denied her. She rested, and had a long Sabbath ; while over an expatriated people, far away, beyond the desert, and beside the river, the seventy years' captivity rolled wearily on.

The few pious men, who had in vain striven to stem a

tide that swept the nation on to ruin, were mourning over the guilt of which this captivity was the punishment. Wearying to be home again, they cried, "How long, O Lord, how long? Wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?" "Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people; thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness; Jerusalem a desolation." "Turn us again, Lord God of Hosts, and cause thy face to shine on us, and so we shall be saved." So they felt and prayed who were as salt in the putrid mass.

The larger portion, however—as has too often been the case in the visible church—lived only to dishonour their faith, their creed, their country, and their race. Like many still, who go abroad, and in leaving their native shores, leave all appearance of piety behind them, they profaned God's holy name, and gave scoffers abundant occasion for the bitter sneer,—“These are the people of the Lord!” In its application to his contemporaries, the prophet briefly describes in my text these sad and sinful days, referring also to that preceding period of deep and wide degeneracy, during which the corruption of kings, princes, priests, and people had arrived at such a height, that, to use the words of Scripture, “Their trespass was grown up to the heavens.” The patience of God was at length exhausted, and as he “drove” the man and woman from the garden, he expelled Israel from the land which their sins had defiled.

However much we may abhor their crimes, it is impossible not to pity the sufferers—in a sense to sympathize with them. Are we men who, were that Firth crowded with hostile ships, would meet invasion boldly on the shore, fight every inch of ground, and, when driven back, take a last stand in our own doorway, nor suffer the foot of foe to pass but over our dead body? If our bosoms burn with any patriotic fire, if we cherish the ordinary affections of men for family and friends, it is not possible to look unmoved on that bleeding fragment of a brave nation gathered for the march to Babylon, amid the blackened and blood-stained ruins of their capital. What a mournful company! The sick, the bedrid, the blind, old men tottering forth on the staff of age, and plucking their grey beards with grief; the skeleton infant hanging on a breast that famine and sorrow have dried; mothers with terror-stricken children clinging to their sides, or, worse still, with gentle daughters imploring their protection from these rude and ruffian soldiers; a few gallant men—the survivors of the fight—wasted by famine, bleeding from unbandaged wounds, their arms bound, and anger flashing through the tears that stream from their eyes as they are turned on wives and daughters shrieking, struggling, fainting in the arms of brutal passion. How they strain at their bonds! how bitterly they envy their more fortunate compatriots who lie in the bloody breach, nor had survived to see the horrors of that day! The piety that abhors the sins of this people is not incompatible with the pity that sympathizes with their sorrows.

We could sit down and weep with Jeremiah, as, seated on a broken pillar of God's plundered temple, desolation around him, no sound in his ear but that long wild wail of the captive band, he wrings his hands, and, raising them to heaven, cries, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

There was a home-leaving, however, in which we feel a nearer interest. I do not refer to that eventful morning when some of us first left a father's house; and the gates of that happy sanctuary slowly opened, amid tears, fears, and many a kind farewell—watched by a father's eye, and followed by a mother's prayers, we pushed out our bark on the swell of life treacherous sea. The turning time of many a young man's history—the crisis of his destiny—that day may have exerted an influence as permanent on our fate as its impression remains indelible on our memory. I refer to a home-leaving of far older date; to one, not of personal, or national, but of universal interest. My eye is turned back on the day when our first parents fell into sin, forfeited their inheritance, and were in consequence expelled from their primeval home. And, having been witness to the reluctance with which a heart-broken mother made up her mind to disown the prodigal, and send him from her door—knowing, when with slow and trembling hand she had barred him out, how it seemed to her as if in that horrid sound she had heard the door of heaven bolted against her son—feeling how much

cruel provocation we could and would endure, ere a bleeding heart consented to turn a child out upon the open streets—believing also that our Father in heaven is kinder than the kindest, and better than the best of us, and that the fondest, fullest heart is to his but as the rocky pool—the lodge of some tiny creature—to the great ocean which has filled it with a wave, no demonstration of God’s abhorrence of sin (always excepting the cross of Calvary) comes so impressively to our hearts as the expulsion of our first parents from his blissful presence and their own sweet home in Eden. When with slow and lingering steps Adam and Eve came weeping forth from Paradise, and the gate was locked behind them, that was the bitterest home-leaving the world has seen. Adam, the federal head of his family—they come not alone. A longer and sadder procession follows them, than went weeping on the way to Babylon. They are attended by a world in tears. Cast out in them—in them condemned and expatriated—we all defiled the land wherein we dwelt. In this sense the world sinned in Adam, and defiled the pure bowers of Eden; and the universality of sin stands indisputable, immovable on the universality of the sentence, “Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

I. Let us look at man sinning. “Ye have defiled the land.”

Sin is presented here in the aspect of a defilement. But before fixing your attention on this feature, I may

remark, that it offers but one of many aspects in which sin appears ; all alarming, all hateful, all detestable.

As opposed to sin and its bitter, baleful consequences, heaven is set forth in the Bible through the emblems of everything we hold most dear and desirable, and painted in colours that glow upon the canvas. Raise your eyes to the New Jerusalem. Gold paves its streets, and around its blissful homes rise walls of jasper. Earth holds no such city, nor the depths of ocean such pearls as form its gates. No storms sweep its sea ; no winter strips its trees ; no thunders shake its serene and cloudless sky ; day there never darkens into night ; harps and palms are in the hand, while crowns of glory flash and blaze upon the heads of its sinless and white robed inhabitants. From this distant and stormy orb, as the dove eyed the ark, faith gazes on the glorious vision, and, weary of the strife, longing to be gone, cries, " Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest ! "

And how difficult would it be to name a noble figure, a sweet simile, a tender or attractive relationship, in which Jesus is not set forth to woo a reluctant sinner and cheer a desponding saint ! Am I wounded ? He is balm. Am I sick ? He is medicine. Am I naked ? He is clothing. Am I poor ? He is wealth. Am I hungry ? He is bread. Am I thirsty ? He is water. Am I in debt ? He is a surety. Am I in darkness ? He is a sun. Have I a house to build ? He is a rock. Am I to be tried ? He is an advocate. Am I condemned ? He is pardon. Must I face that black and

gathering storm? He is an anchor sure and stedfast. To deck him out, and set him forth, Nature culls her finest flowers, brings her choicest ornaments, lays her richest treasures at his feet. The skies contribute their stars. The sea gives up its pearls. From fields, and mines, and mountains, Earth brings the rich tribute of her gold, and gems, and myrrh, and frankincense; the lily of the valley, the clustered vine, and the fragrant rose of Sharon. He is the "chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." I offer—make a free offer of him to you, and doing so dare challenge the world to name a want for which I shall not find the supply in Christ, something that fits your want as accurately as the works of a key the wards of its lock.

"A Way he is to lost ones that have strayed;
A Robe he is to such as naked be;
Is any hungry, to all such he is Bread;
Is any weak, in Him how strong is he!
To him that's dead he's Life; to sick men, Health;
Eyes to the blind, and to the poor man Wealth."

Look now at Sin; pluck off that painted mask, and turn upon her face the lamp of God's Word. We start, it reveals a death's head. I stay not to quote texts descriptive of sin. It is a debt, a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, a poison, a serpent, a sting—everything that man hates it is; a load of curses and calamities beneath whose crushing, most intolerable pressure, "the whole creation groaneth." Name me the evil that springs not from this root—the crime that

lies not at this door. Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is the sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul?—Sin. Who, with icy breath, blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?—Sin. Who, by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid ever fancied, changes sweet children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters, and their fathers into worse than Herods—the murderers of their own innocents?—Sin. Who casts the apple of discord on household hearths? Who lights the torch of war, and carries it blazing over happy lands? Who, by divisions in the Church, rends Christ's seamless robe?—Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite asleep, and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who, with winning smiles on her face, and honied flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality, and, when suspicion sleeps, pierces our temples with a nail? What Siren is this, who, seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arms around our neck, to leap with us into perdition?—Sin. Who petrifies the soft and gentlest heart? Who hurls reason from her throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the precipice, into a lake of fire?—Sin. Who, having brought the criminal to the gallows, persuades him to refuse a pardon, and with his own insane hand to bar

the door against the messenger of mercy? What witch of hell is it, that thus bewitches us?—Sin. Who nailed the Son of God to that bloody tree? and who, as if it were not a dove descending with the olive, but a vulture swooping down to devour the dying, vexes, grieves, thwarts, repels, drives off the Spirit of God? Who is it that makes man in his heart and habits baser than a beast; and him, who was once but little lower than an angel, but little better than a devil?—Sin. Oh! Sin. Thou art a hateful and horrible thing; that “abominable thing which God hates.” And what wonder? Thou hast insulted his holy Majesty; thou hast bereaved him of beloved children; thou hast crucified the Son of his infinite love; thou hast vexed his gracious Spirit; thou hast defied his power; challenged his wrath; despised his grace; and in the body and blood of Jesus, as if that were a common thing, thou hast trodden under foot his matchless mercy. Brethren, surely, the wonder of wonders is, that sin is not that abominable thing which *we* also hate.

But leaving what is general, let us fix our attention on that view of sin which the text presents. Here it is set forth as a defilement; and what else in the eye of God can deform and does defile us? Yet how strange it is, that some deformity of body shall prove the subject of more parental regrets and personal mortification than this most foul deformity of soul. Is it not miserable to think how hearts have grieved, and even eyes, which got their tears surely for better uses, have wept over the stain on some costly dress, that never grieved

and never wept for a sin-stained soul? What pains are taken, what costs and cares incurred, to bedeck the body for the house of God, as if this flimsy finery could conceal or compensate for a foul heart within! Your manners may have acquired a courtly polish; your dress may rival the winter's snow; unaccustomed to menial offices, and sparkling with Indian gems, your hands may bear no stain, yet they are not clean; nay, beneath that graceful exterior may lie concealed more foul pollution than is covered by a beggar's rags. This son of toil, from whose very touch your delicacy shrinks, and who, till Sabbath stops the wheels of business, and with her kind hand wipes the sweat of labour from his brow, never knows the full comfort of a cleanly attire, may have a heart within, which, compared with yours, is purity itself. Beneath this soiled raiment, he wears, all unseen by the world's eye, the "clean linen" of a Redeemer's righteousness. His speech may be rude, his accent vulgar; but let him open his heart, unbosom its secrets, and such gracious thoughts, such holy desires, such heavenly aspirations, such hallowed joys come forth, that it seems as if we had opened some rude sea-chest, brought by a foreign ship from southern lands, which, full to the lid with pearls, and gold, and diamonds, loads the air with floating odours of cassia, and myrrh, and frankincense.

Hypocrite and dead professor! let us open thy bosom: full of all corruption, how it smells like a charnel-house! We are driven back by the noisome stench—we hasten to close the door. It is a painted,

putrid sepulchre, whose fair exterior. but aggravates the foulness within. Yes. It is not what lies without, but within, that defiles a man. And when you wash on a Sabbath morning, it is well to remember that your soul needs washing in another laver ; when your person is decked for church, that you need other robes—a raiment fairer than worm spins or shuttles weave, or the wealth of banks can buy. See that by faith ye put on Christ, that righteousness of his, in which the eye of God sees neither spot nor stain, nor any such thing.

II. The nature of this defilement.

It is internal. Like snow-drift, when it has levelled the churchyard mounds, and, glistening in the winter sun, lies so pure, and fair, and beautiful above the dead, that fester and rot below, a plausible profession may wear the look of innocence, and conceal from human eyes the foulest heart-corruption. The grass grows green upon the sides of the mountain that holds a volcano in its bowels. Behind the rosy cheek and lustrous eye of beauty, how often does there lurk a deadly disease, the deadliest of all ! Internal, but all the more dangerous that they are internal, such maladies are the last to be suspected or believed in by their victims, and the hardest to cure. To other than the physician's skill or a mother's anxious look, this fair and graceful form never wears bloom of higher health, nor moves in more fascinating charms, nor wins more admiring eyes, than when fell

consumption, like a miner working on in darkness, has penetrated the vital organs, and is quietly sapping the foundations of life.

Like these maladies, sin has its seat within. It is a disease of the heart, and the worst and deadliest of all heart-complaints. Looking on the surface there may be no symptom to create alarm; in the conduct that lies exposed to human eyes there may be little offensive to holiness; yet this fair exterior affords no criterion whatever, no sure or certain test by which to judge of matters within. Thanks indeed be to God and praise to sovereign grace, if sin does not find unchallenged entrance, and meet a cordial welcome in our inner man; yet how constant, how arduous, how prolonged, is the fight which even gracious men have to maintain against the tendency to secret errors! The old man has been nailed to the tree, but how difficult to keep him upon the cross! How difficult to keep pollution down, and maintain a current of pure and hallowed desires flowing through the channels of the heart! It is well to judge ourselves that we be not judged, yet, in doing so, beware how you trust to outward appearances. What if it should be with us as with this unruffled pool, which seems so clean, nay, with heaven mirrored in its face, so beautiful? Let some temptations stir up our passions, (and how little does it need to stir them!) and those pure, pellucid waters grow foul and noisome; and, sending forth the most offensive odours, prove what vile pollution may lie concealed beneath the fairest surface. Think not that the evil is accidental—that, as

some say, it lies in education, in temptation, in external causes. It is traceable to the heart itself. What more harmless than temptations—this fiery dart launched by Satan's hand—that flaming arrow from his bow—if they fell like sparks in water? Alas! they fall like a torch flung into a magazine of combustibles. Knowing this, and jealous of themselves, let God's people watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. To life's last step, with life's latest breath, be this your prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Another prayer, indeed, the sinner is called to offer. You have not to seek that your heart may be kept clean, but made clean; it is not health preserved, but health restored you want; you need not food, but medicine; a new nature, a new heart, a new life: this the prayer that suits thy lips and meets thy case: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

This defilement is universal. Our world is inhabited by various races of men—different specimens, not different species. The Mongolian, the Negro, the race early cradled among Caucasian mountains, and the Red Indians of the new world; these all differ from each other in the colour of the skin, in the contour of the skull, in the cast and character of their features. Whence came this variety? "God made of one blood all the families of the earth;" so says the Bible. According to that authority they are all sprung of one pair, who were located in a garden somewhere in the distant east. There, in that central and elevated region of the old

world, our race was both created and redeemed; there the cradle of our family was rocked, and the cross of salvation raised; and, first breaking forth in an eastern sky, the lights of knowledge and religion, learning human and divine, letters, science, and arts have, as by a law of nature, followed on the track of the sun. The origin of these different races is a question of no small importance, and has formed a battle-ground between the enemies and defenders of our faith; one long and obstinately contested.

If, in order to account for these different races on the principles of unchallengeable physiology, it could be demonstrated, that Europe, Africa, and America must, as well as Asia, have had their parent pairs; if it could be proved that there must of necessity have been as many Adams as there are races of men, then it is plain that we must yield up the divine authority of the Bible, and read the story of Moses as an old-world fable—some fragment of Egyptian wisdom, which he had embalmed in the page of Genesis. Infidelity, quick to see what would serve her purpose, has attempted to prove this, and boldly challenged religion to meet her on the field of science. Her challenge has been accepted. Men-at-arms in the ranks of the faith have taken up the gauntlet; the battle has been fought—fought well, and fought out. With what result? To the confusion and complete discomfiture of the infidel, it now stands demonstrated, that in this question, as in others, science is in perfect harmony with revelation. Dismissing all Adams but one, she demands no more than the Bible grants, will

receive no more than it offers, and believe no more than it reveals ; concluding that all these varieties of the human family are, in the providence of God, and in the hands of an Omnipotence which delights in variety, the offspring of a single pair.

There is one argument which these unhired, impartial, and independent defenders of our faith—these high-priests of science—did not, perhaps, feel warranted to employ, but which yet presents to us the most convincing and conclusive evidence of a common origin. - It lies where the tests of chemistry cannot detect it, nor the knife of the anatomist reach it, nor the eye of the physiognomist discover it, nor the instruments of the phrenologist measure it. Its place is in the inner man. It lies in the depths of the soul. It comes out in this remarkable fact, that although the hues of the skin differ, and the form of the skull and the features of the face are cast in different moulds, the features, colour, and character of the heart are the same in all men. Be he pale-faced or red, tawny or black, Jew, Greek, Scythian, bond or free ; whether he be the lettered and civilized inhabitant of Europe, or roam a painted savage in American woods, or pant beneath the burning line, or, wrapt in furs, shiver amid Arctic snows ; as in all classes of society, so in all these races of men (to quote the words of the prophet), “ the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; ” in the no less emphatic language of the Apostle, “ the carnal mind is enmity against God.” The pendulum vibrates slower at the equator than the pole ; the further north we push

our way over thick-ribbed ice, the clock goes the faster ; but parallels of latitude have no modifying influence on the motions of the heart. It beats the same in all men ; nor, till repaired by grace, does it in any beat true to God. In Adam all have died—have sinned, and therefore died. Thus sin, like our atmosphere, embraces the world. Like death, it is universal. Its empire is coeval and co-extensive with that of the king of terrors. How can it be otherwise? If man is the child of unholy parents, how can a clean thing come out of an unclean? When water of its own accord shall rise above its fountain, then may Adam's children boast of a nature loftier and holier than his. The tree is diseased, not at the top, but at the root ; and, therefore, no one branch of the human family can possibly escape being affected by sin. Is anything plainer, more palpable than this, that if the fountain was polluted, to whatever quarter of the world the stream of population flowed, it must have borne pollution in its bosom? Is suffering the sure index of sin? Then, if there be no country beneath the sun where signs of suffering are not seen, and sounds of pain are not heard, sin is everywhere—is in every man. Be they dug in Greenland snows, or in the desert sands, there is no land without its graves ; nor, wherever it stands, a city without its cemetery. Be they monarchies or republics, unaffected by the revolutions that cast down other dynasties, death reigns in them all—a king of kings. Death sits on the world's oldest throne. Suffering the stings of conscience, sin and serpent-bitten, man is condemned by a voice within

him ; there sits a divinity enshrined, enthroned in every soul, whose voice is the clear, articulate, and solemn echo of this judgment, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

This evil is incurable.

Hear the Word of the Lord ; "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." Again, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye that have been accustomed to do evil learn to do well." Again, "Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt more and more ?" Of these solemn and humbling truths it were difficult to find a more remarkable illustration than that before us. What effect had God's judgments on his ancient people ? Some children owe their ruin to excessive indulgence ; others, the victims of an injudicious severity, are driven first into falsehood, and from that onward to other crimes. Mismanagement may be laid at our door ; but who will impute error to God, or challenge the wisdom of his ways ? Now, when the scourge was in the hands of a God all wise, what effect had it on his people ? Were they cured by their afflictions, by trials, that extended over years of suffering ? Did these arrest the malady ? Had they the effect even of preventing their sinking deeper into sin ? By no means. As always happens in incurable diseases, the patient grew worse instead of better. "Seducers wax worse and worse." As always happens when life is gone, the dead became more and more offensive. The brighter it shines, and

the more it rains, the thicker the dews of night, and the hotter the sun of day, the faster the dead tree rots; because those agents in nature which promote vegetation and develope the beauty of life—the sounding shower, the silent dews, the summer heat—have no other effect on death than to hasten its putridity and decay. And even so—impressive lesson of the impotency of all means that are unaccompanied by the divine blessing—was it with God's ancient people. He commissioned servants, and he inflicted sufferings; but, until the Spirit of life descended from on high, their habits only grew more depraved, their case more desperate, their profanity more profane; they but laid themselves more and more open to the charge—"The last state of that man is worse than the first." Wherever on weary feet these exiles wandered, they dishonoured religion, disgraced the faith; and, instead of extorting the respect of their oppressors, they but exposed themselves and their God to contempt.

The heathen sneered and said, "These are the people of the Lord!" and—what is less common—these down-trodden exiles, these debased and degraded sinners, seem themselves to have felt the desperate nature of their case; they said, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost."

Now, as we may learn from the history of the Jews, the case of every sinner, apart from divine assistance, is a desperate one. This internal and universal defilement is one which neither sorrows nor sufferings can remove. In a passage which we have already quoted, God says, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and

take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me." Yes. Sorrows have no more virtue than soap, tears than nitre here. Trust not, therefore, in any unsanctified afflictions, as if these could permanently and really change the true condition of your heart. I have seen the characters of the writing remain on paper which the flames had turned into a film of buoyant coal ; I have seen the thread that had been passed through the fire, retain, in its cold grey ashes, the twist which it had got in spinning ; I have found every shivered splinter of the flint as hard as the unbroken stone : and, let trials come, in providence, sharp as the fire and ponderous as the crushing hammer, unless a gracious God send along with these something else than these, bruised, broken, bleeding as thy heart may be, its nature remains the same. You may weep for your sins ; and, since all of us have need to seek a more tender conscience, and that this too cold and callous heart were warmed and softened, sorry should I be to stop your weeping. Should a mote of dust get into the natural eye, the irritation induced will weep out the evil ; and so, in a way, with sin offending a tender and holy conscience. But tears—oceans of tears—wash not guilt away. Although all are lost that fall not on the feet of Jesus ; yet even the tears which bathe a Saviour's feet wash not away our sins. When falling thickest—flowing fastest, we are to remember that it is not the tears we shed, but the blood he shed, which is the price of pardon ; and that guilty souls are nowhere cleansed but in that bath of blood where the foulest are welcome to wash and certain to be cleansed. From its

crimson margin a Magdalene and a Manasseh have gone up to glory; and since their times, succeeding ages have been daily and more fully proving, that grace is still free, salvation still full, and that still the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

MAN SINNING.

When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 17.

I HAVE dreamed a dream," said Joseph, "and behold the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to me." Our earth was once supposed to occupy a place of no less honour in creation. Turning daily on its axis, and performing also an annual revolution round the sun, our globe is in incessant motion; and yet it was once believed that its state was one of rest—perfect rest, and that, like the small pivot on which some great wheel revolves, it formed a centre, around which went rolling the whole machinery of heaven, those suns and planets, both fixed and wandering stars. This dream of science met a happier fate than Joseph's. Believed in the credulous ages of the world's childhood, it was obstinately clung to as an article of faith down to no very distant period. It is not so long ago since the telescope of Galileo demonstrated that our earth—whatever the Pope might say to the contrary—is a satellite of the sun, and but one of many orbs that roll around him; and he but one of many suns, which, requiring millions of years to complete their circle, revolve about some greater centre. At

some period preceding the philosopher's discovery, the throne of Spain was occupied by a man who had acuteness enough to perceive, that if all these vast systems, suns, planets, and comets, were daily turning round this earth, then, in making the greater subservient to the less, the Creator of the universe had constructed a clumsy and very cumbersome piece of mechanism. History has preserved the profane language of his dissent from the science of his own day. It was something to the effect, that if God had consulted him when he made the worlds, they would have been better designed. Far be it from us, under any perplexity felt in contemplating the mechanism of creation or the mysteries of providence, to question the wisdom of God, to cherish a thought so daring, or utter an expression so profane. In his dealings toward us his way may be in the sea, his path in the mighty waters, and his footsteps not known ; "by terrible things in righteousness," he may answer us ; but although he dash the cup of happiness from our hand, or fill it to the brim with "wine of astonishment," we shall never deem it right to think that God has done wrong. Whatever appearance of error his ways or works may present, be assured that the defect is not in the object, but in the spectator ; in the eye that sees, not in the thing that is seen ; in you, not in God ; not in the plans of infinite wisdom, but in the finite mind, which has the folly to condemn what it has not the understanding to comprehend. "Manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; in wisdom hast thou made them all."

Such is the judgment of the Psalmist. From this verdict no work of God so strongly tempts us to dissent as the condition and character of man himself; and I am ignorant of any way by which so well to meet this temptation as by receiving into our creed the doctrine of the Fall. If we reject this doctrine,—if we hold with some that the children are not in any sense implicated in their parents' sin,—then, in the providence of God, and in the government of the world, there appears to me nothing, I shall not say so deficient in wisdom, but so obscure, so inscrutable, so painfully and fearfully mysterious, as the position and character of man. On the supposition that he has never fallen,—that the vessel is as pure and perfect as when it passed from the potter's hand—these questions are ever rising, and, dismiss them as we may, are ever returning,—how could a good God make such a wicked creature? How could a kind God make such an unhappy creature? How could a wise God make such a foolish creature? How could a holy God make such a sinful creature? If it is impossible for a pure stream to be born of a polluted fountain, is it not as impossible that a crystal fountain can be the parent of a polluted stream? If a clean thing cannot come out of an unclean, is not the conclusion as fair, as logical, as inevitable, that an unclean thing cannot come out of a clean?

Now let us shut the Bible—exclude every ray of inspired and celestial light; we stand in darkness; and yet the subject seems to me like the dead substance, the decaying wood, the putrid animal matter which grows

luminous through its decay, and emits in death a phosphorescent light. By the help of man's very corruption we have light enough to discover his fallen, dead, degraded state. Indeed, I would a thousand times sooner believe that man made himself what he is, than that God made him so ; for in the one case I should think ill only of man ; in the other, if not compelled, I am at least tempted to blame his Maker. Just think, I pray you, to what conclusion our reason would conduct us in any analogous case. You see, for example, a beautiful capital still bearing a few of the flowers and some vestiges of the foliage which the sculptor's chisel had carved upon the marble. It is prostrate, lying on the ground, half-buried among rank weeds and nettles ; while beside it there rises from its pedestal the headless shaft of a noble column. Would you not conclude at once that its present position, so base and mean, was not its original position ? You say the lightning must have struck it down ; or an earthquake had shaken it, or some ignorant barbarian had climbed the shaft, and with rude hand hurled it to the ground. Well, we look at man, and arrive at a similar conclusion. There is something, there is much that is wrong, both in his state and condition. His mind is carnal, and at enmity with God ; the "imaginations of his heart are only evil continually." So says the Bible. His body is the seat of disease ; his eyes are often swimming in tears ; care—anticipating old age—has drawn deep furrows on his brow ; he possesses noble faculties, but, like people of high descent, who have sunk into the low estate of slaves or menial

servants, they drudge in the service of the meanest passions. He has an immortal soul, but it is clogged by the infirmities, and imprisoned within the walls of a "body of death." His life is vanity. He is ever seeking happiness, but like the child who chases the rainbow, or climbs the hill-top to catch the silvery moon, he is doomed to disappointment, he never finds the object of his search. In some respects manifestly made for a sphere higher than he fills, he appears to us like a creature of the air which a cruel hand has stripped of its silken wings. How painfully he resembles this hapless object which has just fallen on the pages of a book that we read by the candle on an autumn evening! it retains the wish, but has lost the power to fly; allured by the taper's glare, it has brushed the flame, and, dropping with a heavy fall, now it crawls wingless across the page, and seeks the finger of mercy to end its misery. Compare man with any of the other creatures of God, and how directly we come to the conclusion that he is not, cannot be the creature he came from his Maker's hands!

Who has not had this truth borne in upon his mind when his feet carried him forth into the beauteous realms of nature? I pass out among her sylvan scenes; and here, on the spray of the tasseled broom, there sits a little bird; he sings, filling the glen with melody. From throat and throbbing breast, hear how he rings out the sweetest music, as with keen bright eye he now looks up to God and next down on the bush where his mate is seated with wings extended over their

unfeathered nestlings ; with lightsome song he cheers her cares, and is then away on busy wing to cater for the mother and her young. Next, I turn my steps to the open moor ; and so soon as the intruder appears on her lonely domain, the lapwing comes down upon the wind. Brave and venturesome she sweeps us with her wing, and shrieks out her distress as she wheels round and round our head. Her homeless brood are cowering on that naked waste ; nor does she rest until our foot is off the ground, and even then, when the coast is clear, we hear her long wild screams, like the beating of a mother's heart when her child is saved—like the mournful dash of waves upon the shore long after the wind is down. Next I climb the mountain, when snow drifts thick from murky heavens, and—like Satan taking advantage of a believer's trials—the wily fox has left his cairn and prowls abroad for his prey. Every mother of the flock lies there with a tender lamb behind her ; with her body she screens it from the rudeness of the storm ; and with her head to the wind, and expanded nostrils snuffing the distant danger, she lies ready, so soon as her eye catches the stealthy foe, to start to her feet, receive him on her horns, and die like a true mother, in her lamb's defence. Such are God's creatures. And although the shock of the Fall has been felt throughout all this lower creation, which “groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,” yet the work is to a great extent unmarred,—the workmanship as it came from the Maker's hand ; and away among these old hoar hills, remote from man, his cities, his sins, his works, his

sorrows, we are out of hearing of the groans of creation ; and, but for the corruption we carry within us, we could forget the Fall. Stretched on a fragrant bank of thyme, with the hum of bees, the song of birds, and the chirp of the merry grasshopper in our ear, a cloudless sky overhead, and beneath us the placid lake, where each flower and bush and birch-tree of the rock looks down into the mirror of its own beauty, the murmur of the waterfall sounds to us, like an echo from the crags of the Creator's voice, "All is very good."

But let us retrace our steps along the dusty road from the bosky glen where the little bird sings, and the moor where the lapwing screams out her fears, and the hill where the timid sheep faces the fox to die for her offspring, or the forest den, where the bear with her cubs behind her offers her shaggy bosom to the hunter's spear. Enter this town. Look at that wretched mother, as we saw her when Sabbath bells rung worshippers to prayer, and God was calling sinners to a throne of mercy. Her back rests against the church's wall ; she has sunk on the cold pavement ; her senses are steeped in drink ; and on her lap—pitiful sight ! lies an emaciated, half-naked infant, with the chill cold rain soaking its scanty rags, and lashing its pallid face. Is this mother God's handiwork ? Is this the clay as it came from the potter's wheel ? Was it in such shape as this that woman came from her Maker's hand ? When Adam awoke, was Eve such as this her daughter ? If so, better he had never woke ; if so, it had been good for him to be alone. But nature,

to say nothing of religion, revolts from the impious thought.

It is common enough to call such spectacles brutal. The language is a libel on creation, and a blasphemy against the Creator. These scenes are not brutal. My very argument lies in this, that the brute beasts never present themselves in such a degraded and revolting aspect. Under the impulse of instincts necessary for their well-being, for the due balance of races, and the general welfare of the world, they may, and indeed must prey upon each other. They do destroy each other, but did man ever find them committing self-destruction? Range the wide fields of nature, travel from the equator to the poles, rise from the worm that crawls out of its hole to the eagle that springs from the rock to cleave the clouds, and where shall you find anything that corresponds either to our scenes of suicidal dissipation, or the blood-stained fields of war? Suppose that, on his return from Africa, some Park, or Bruce, or Campbell, were to tell how he had seen the lions of the desert leave their prey, and, meeting face to face in marshalled bands, amid roars that drowned the thunder, engage in deadly battle. Would he find one man so credulous as to believe him? The world would laugh the traveller and his tale to scorn. But should anything so strange and monstrous occur—while the air shook with their bellowings, and the ground trembled beneath their hoofs, should we see the cattle rush from their distant pastures, to form two vast, black, solid, opposing columns; and, with heads levelled to the charge, should these herds dash forward to

bury their horns in each other's bodies, we would proclaim a prodigy—asking what madness had seized creation.

Well, is not sin the parent of more awful prodigies? Look here—turn to the bloody horrors of this battlefield. This is no fancy picture, but a fact—a sad, sickening fact. The trampled ground lies thick with the mangled brave; the air is shaken with the most horrible sounds; every countenance expresses the passions of a fiend. Covering her eyes, humanity flies shrieking from the scene, and leaves it to rage, revenge, and agony. Fiercer than the cannon's flash flames of wrath shoot from brothers' eyes; they draw, they brandish their swords, they sheath them in each other's bowels; every stroke makes a widow, every ringing volley scatters a hundred orphans on a homeless world. Sooner would I be an atheist, and believe that there was no God at all, than that man appears in this scene as he came from the hand of a benignant Divinity. Man must have fallen. Nature, society, the state of the world, are so many echoes of the voice of Revelation; they proclaim our fall—that the gold has become dim—that the most fine gold has changed; and, in words to which we again turn your attention, that we have defiled the land in which we dwell, by our ways and by our doings. Now, leaving the subject of Original, to speak of Actual Sin, we remark—

I. Apart from derived sinfulness, we have personal sins to answer for.

Dispose of the doctrine of Original Sin as you

please ; suppose that you could disprove it ; when that count of the indictment is cancelled, what advantage have you gained ? Enough, more than enough, remains to convict us of guilt, and condemn all within these walls. You may deny original, but can any man in his senses deny actual sin ? You may as well deny your existence ; it sticks to you like your shadow. “ If we should say that we have no sin, we make God a liar, and the truth is not in us.”

“ Come let us reason together.” Do you mean, on the one hand, to affirm, that you have never been guilty of doing what you should not have done ? or, on the other, that you were never guilty of not doing what you should have done ? Lives there a man so happy as to look back on the past and feel no remorse, or forward to the future and feel no fear ? What ! is there no page of your history that you would obliterate—no passage that you would erase—no leaf that, with God’s permission, you would tear from the book ? Is there neither work, nor word, nor wish of days gone by, that you would not, if you could, recall ? To David’s prayer, “ Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions,” have you no solemn and hearty Amen ? Could you be carried back to the starting post, leant you again an infant against the cradle, stood you again a child at your mother’s knee, sate you again a boy at the old school desk, with companions that are now changed, or scattered, or dead and gone—were you again a youth to begin life anew—would you run the self-same course ; would you live over the self-same life ?

What! is there no speech that you would unsay? is there no act that you would undo? is there no Sabbath that you would spend better? are there none yet alive, or mouldering in the grave, none now blest in heaven or damned in hell, to whom you would bear yourself otherwise than you have done? Are there none gone to their account whose memory stings you, and whose possible fate, whose everlasting state fills you with the most painful anxiety? Did you never share in sins that may have proved their ruin? never fail in faithfulness that might have saved their souls? Oh! if every thread of life's web were yet to weave, what man would make the future a faithful—I will add, fearful copy of the past? I will make bold to say no man living would; and that the Apostle has universal conscience on his side, when he declares, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” No sin! Our sins are more in number than the hairs upon our head; nor do I know of language or attitude so becoming us as those of Ezra, when, rending his mantle, that holy man fell upon his knees to cry, “Oh, my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is gone up into the heavens.”

II. The guilt of these actual sins is our own.

“Hast thou eaten of the tree?” God puts the question, and man replies, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I

did eat." Adam points an accusing finger at Eve; and turning round to the woman, God says, "What is this that thou hast done?" She in turn lays the blame on the serpent, saying, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." And, each repudiating the guilt, thus and thus they shift the sin. We have "eaten of the tree;" and—unless it be to roll the guilt on Jesus Christ—we attempt in vain to fix the blame on others—to lay the burden on any shoulders but our own.

There are strong pleas which the poor heathen may advance in extenuation of their guilt; there are excuses which they, stepping forward with some confidence to judgment—may urge upon a just and merciful as well as holy God.

They may say, we knew no better; no man cared for our souls. Great God! when thy followers landed on our benighted shores, they brought no olive branch or Bible; they came with fire, and sword, and chains, and slavery. On the back of those who, bearing thy name, oppressed us, plundered us, enslaved us, and left us to die ignorant of thy love, we lay our guilt. Let them answer for us. Place these Christians at thy bar; demand of them "where is thy brother Abel?" and on their heads, not on ours, let thy dread justice fall. Again, this wretched child, the victim of cruel neglect, who has left cold and hunger and a bed of straw or a bare floor to stand at the bar of God, may lift up his injured head at that august tribunal, and stand on his defence with more certain expectation both of justice and pity than he ever met here below. In shivering

cold and nakedness, in gnawing hunger and thirst, in rags and heathen ignorance, he was left to wander our hard streets, nor, among all the Christians of this city, was there one kind hand to guide his erring feet to Sabbath church or infant school. Poor wretch! pity was not for him; kindness was not for him; the house of God was not for him; but now that he addresses one who will not rudely order him away nor refuse to hear him—child of misfortune!—how may he say, Merciful Lord! my mother taught me to steal, my father taught me to swear. How could I obey a Bible which I never learned to read? How could I believe in thee, whom no one taught me to know? Saviour of sinners! condemn me not; how was I to avoid sins against which I was never warned? No man cared for my soul. I did not know what I did. I throw myself at thy feet. Seizing thy cross I claim the benefit of its dying prayer, “Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*”

What value may be given to these pleas—what weight they may carry at a tribunal where much shall be exacted of those who have received much, and little asked where little has been given—it is not for us to say, or attempt to determine. The judge of all the earth will do right. But this we know, that we have no such excuse to plead, nor any such plea to urge, in extenuation of our offences—of one of a thousand of our offences. Some, indeed, plead their natural proneness to sin; excusing themselves to conscience on that ground, or on this, that the temptation before which they fell, fell on them with the suddenness and vehe-

mence of a hurricane. The command, however, to watch and pray leaves you without excuse. You were fully warned. You should have been on the outlook for the *white* squall. The sentinel is righteously shot who is caught asleep upon his post.

Supposing, however, that the plea were accepted; enough, I repeat, more than enough, remains to condemn us, and leave guilt no refuge out of Christ. We talk of the strength, we plead the suddenness of temptation; but how often have we sinned designedly, deliberately, repeatedly? We talk of a natural bias to sin; but who has not committed sins that he could have avoided—sins which he could have abstained from, and sins which he did abstain from, when it served some present purpose to do so? This reeling sot and slave of drunkenness keeps sober at a communion season; and that swearer, who alleges that he cannot refrain from oaths, puts a bridle on his tongue in the presence of his minister. It is useless for the sinner to allege that he is swept away by temptation; “he conceiveth mischief, and he bringeth forth falsehood;” and if swept away, it is as the suicide, who repairs to the river, stands on its brink, and, leaping in, is swept off to his watery grave. I know that Satan goes about seeking whom he may devour, but, while he tempts *us*, how often have we tempted him? Stealing on unawares, like a lion crouching to the leap, with sudden and unlooked for spring he may throw himself upon us; but how often have we cast ourselves in his way? We have gone down to Delilah; we have stood in the way

of sinners ; we have sinned when we knew that we were sinning ; we have repaired to scenes where we knew that we were to sin. In pursuit of its guilty pleasures—trampling conscience beneath our feet, and more than that, the body and blood of Jesus Christ—we have done what the heathen never did, what Sodom and Gomorrah never did, what Tyre and Sidon never did—we have rejected a Saviour, and insanely refused eternal life. There is hope for us in the blood of his cross, but none in its prayer. We knew what we did.

Some years ago, on a great public occasion, a distinguished statesman rose to address his countrymen, and, in reply to certain calumnious and dishonourable charges, held up his hands in the vast assembly, exclaiming, “These hands are clean.” Now, if you or I or any of our fallen race did entertain a hope that we could act over this scene before a God sitting in judgment, I could comprehend the calm, the unimpassioned indifference with which men sit in church on successive Sabbaths, idly eyeing the cross of Calvary, and listening with drowsy ears to the overtures of mercy. Are these, I ask, matters with which you have nothing to do ? If, indeed, you have no sins to answer for—if before this world’s great assize you are prepared not only to plead, but to prove your innocence—if conscience accuses you in nothing, and excuses you in everything—then sleep on, in God’s name sleep on, and take your rest. But when the heavens over men are clothed in thunders, and hell yawns beneath their feet, and both God’s law and their own conscience condemn them, such indifference

is insanity! Beware! Play with no fire; least of all, with fire unquenchable. Play with no edged sword; least of all, with that which justice sheathed in a Saviour's bosom. Play by the mouth of no pit; least of all, on the brink of that—the smoke of whose torment goeth up for ever and ever. Think of these things. What incalculable issues are at stake? Your everlasting destiny may turn upon this hour.

Do you feel under condemnation? Are you really anxious to be saved? Be not turned from such a blessed purpose by the jeers and taunts of the ungodly. It is a very common thing with scoffers, and with those who use their religion as a cloak always worn loosely, nor ever drawn closely round, save, so to speak, in inclement weather—when distress troubles, or death alarms them, it is no uncommon thing for such to eye all men of zeal with cold suspicion, and represent them as either rogues or fools, fanatics, or hypocrites. I might answer this charge. Fools! I could produce an array of brilliant and immortal names—names of men in whom a child-like piety has been associated with the highest intellect, the loftiest genius, the most profound and statesmanlike sagacity—men beside whom most of your scoffers, sceptics, and worldlings were as dwarfs in the company of giants. Folly! if Christians really such are chargeable with any folly, it is with that of not being zealous enough—with that of being, not too much, but too little religious. In the name of common sense and religion also, I ask, is it possible, if there be a hell, to be too anxious to escape it? If men are

perishing, can I, with children, brothers, sisters, friends in the burning, be too anxious to save them? The man who leaves his bed at mirk midnight to quench the flames in a neighbour's house, is surely no fool; but he who can coolly eat his meals beside the sea, or go singing about his common avocations along the shore, when a wreck is in his eye, and the roar of the surf and the shrieks of the drowning are in his ear, he is a fool, or something worse.

As to the insinuation of general hypocrisy, the wretched charge got up against all religion, when some specious professor stands unmasked before the world, how absurd it is! Is there no sound grain in our barnyards, because there is so much chaff? Are all patriots—Wallace and the Bruce, Tell, Russel, and Washington—deceivers and liars, because some men have villainously betrayed their country? Is there no bright honour in our army, because some soldiers—the sweepings probably of our city streets—have deserted,—left the lines, and leapt the trenches, and gone over to the enemy? Is there no such virtue as integrity among British merchants, because now and then we hear of a fraudulent bankruptcy? Because some religious professors prove hypocrites, is therefore all ardent piety hollow hypocrisy? To reason so, argues either a disordered intellect, or a very depraved heart. The conclusion is as contrary to logic as to love. When or where were hypocrites ever known to suffer for principle? Yet is there a country within the bounds of Christendom that has not been strewn thick with the ashes and dyed red

with the blood of martyrs? Have not their heads in ghastly rows stood spiked above our city gates? Two hundred years ago, and the windows of the very houses that still stand beside this church were crowded with eager faces taking their last look of men who went with firm step and lofty carriage to die—loving Christ more than their lives, and, as one said before they threw him off, ready—had they as many lives as they had hairs on their head, to lay them all down for Christ. Religion has fairly won her honours, and stands before you an honest thing, and the highest wisdom. Whatever you be, be religious. God working in you, work out your salvation. The way to the refuge lies open; with the feet of an Azazel haste to Jesus. Once in him, you can turn on the avenger, saying, Man-slayer, I fear thee not; here thou comest, but no further; this blood-red line thou canst not pass—"There is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus."

Do you see that sin, staining your holiest services, has defiled your head, heart, hands, feet—the whole man? Haste to the fountain where sins are lost and souls are cleansed. With its base ingratitude to your heavenly Father—the wounds it has inflicted on a most loving Saviour—the grief it has caused, and the resistance it has offered, to a most gentle and Holy Spirit—the deep injuries it has done your own soul, and souls which, loving, you should have longed, and yearned, and laboured, and watched, and wept, and prayed to save—Oh, let sin be your deepest sorrow, your heaviest grief, the spring of many tears, the

burden of many sighs, the occasion of daily visits to the cross of Calvary.

“ Weep not for broad lands lost ;
Weep not for fair hopes crossed ;
Weep not when limbs wax old ;
Weep not when friends grow cold ;
Weep not, that death must part
Thine and the best-loved heart :
Yet weep—weep all thou can—
Weep, weep, because thou art
A sin-defiled man.”

MAN SUFFERING.

Wherefore I poured my fury upon them, and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries. According to their way and according to their doings, I judged them.
EZEKIEL xxxvi. 18, 19.

IT appears a very easy thing to say what a plant or animal is. It is not so. There are myriads of living creatures that occupy the debateable ground between the vegetable and animal kingdoms; nor have naturalists yet determined on which side of the border to assign them a place—whether to rank them among plants or animals. What is man? It seems an easy thing to answer that question; yet I am not sure that, even at this day, we have any correct definition which—distinguishing man on the one hand from the angelic race and on the other hand from the higher orders of inferior creatures—is at once brief and comprehensive. Now, if we have such difficulty in defining even ourselves, or those objects that, being patent to the senses, may be made the subject of searching and prolonged experiment, is it wonderful that, when we rise above his works to their Maker, from things finite to things infinite, it should be found much easier to ask than answer the question, “What is God?” The telescope by which we hold

converse with the stars, the microscope which unveils the secrets of nature, the crucible of the chemist, the knife of the anatomist, the reflective faculties of the philosopher, all the common instruments of science avail not here. On the threshold of that impenetrable mystery, from out the clouds and darkness that are round about God's throne, a voice arrests our advancing steps; the question comes, "Who can by searching find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

Divines, notwithstanding, have ventured on a definition of God. According to the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." A very comprehensive definition, no doubt; yet did it never strike you as strange, that there is no mention of love here, and that that is a very remarkable omission?—an omission as remarkable as if one undertook to describe the firmament, and left out the sun, or, painting the human face made it sightless, giving no place on the canvas to those beaming eyes which impart to the features their life and expression.

Why did an assembly, for piety, learning, and talents, the greatest, perhaps, that ever met in England, or anywhere else, give us that catalogue of the divine attributes, and deny a place to love? Unless we are to understand the term goodness as comprehending love, the omission may be thus explained and illustrated. Take a globe, and observing their natural order, lay on its surface the hues of the rainbow; give it a rapid

motion round its axis ; and now you no longer see blue, red, yellow, and the other colours. As if by magic, the whirling sphere changes into purest white, presenting to our eyes and understanding a visible proof that the sunbeam is not a simple, but compound body, a thread spun of various rays, which form, when blended into one, what we call light. Now, may it not be, that these divines make no distinct mention of love just because they held that as all the colours blended together form light, so all the attributes acting together make love ; and that thus, because God has justice, wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and truth, of necessity therefore, and in the express words of John, “ God is love.” This is the briefest and best definition of Divinity. This had been John’s answer to the question, “ What is God ? ”

It may be said, and is no doubt true, that objects take a colour from the eyes that look at them. The very sun, as well as sky and sea and mountains, appear yellow to the jaundiced eye ; the brightest prospects wear an air of gloom to a gloomy mind ; a sunny temper gilds the edges of life’s blackest cloud, and flings a path of light across its stormiest sea ; contentment sits down to a crust of bread and a cup of water, and gives God thanks ; and the plainest person is beautiful in the eyes of fond affection. Now it may be thought, to John’s loving eye, his heavenly Father seemed so loving and so lovely, that it was very natural for him to give the colour of his own eyes to this divine object, and say, “ God is love.” But it is to be remembered, that when

he gave this shortest, sweetest definition of divinity, he was not painting objects only as they appeared to him. He was a pen in the hand of inspiration—like the keys of a musical instrument, he sounded to the movements of another's will, and the touch of another's finger. One of the holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—it was not he, but God himself, who thus described and defined himself, "God is love."

Assuming then that God is love, it may be asked, how does that harmonise with the text? How is it to be reconciled with words where God represents himself as pouring down his fury like a thunder shower, and scattering his people, in a storm of indignation, as light and worthless chaff blown away upon the wind. How, it may be asked, does this consist with God's love and mercy? Now, there is no greater mistake than to suppose that God, as a God of justice and a God of mercy, stands in antagonism to himself. It is not mercy, but injustice, which is irreconcilable with justice. It is cruelty, not justice, that stands opposed to mercy. These attributes of Jehovah are not contrary the one to the other, as are the elements of light and darkness, fire and water, truth and falsehood, right and wrong. No. Like two streams which unite their separate waters to form a common river, justice and mercy are combined in the work of redemption. Like the two cherubins whose wings met above the ark—like the two devout and holy men who drew the nails from Christ's body and bore it to the grave—like the two angels who received it in charge, and, seated like mourners within

the sepulchre, the one at the head, the other at the feet, kept silent watch over the precious treasure—justice and mercy are associated in the work of Christ. They are the supporters of the shield on which the cross is emblazoned; they sustain the arms of our heavenly Advocate; they form the two solid and eternal pillars of the Mediator's throne. On Calvary mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.

These remarks may prepare our minds for entering with advantage on the solemn subject of God's punitive justice; but, ere we open the prison, and look down into the pit, I would further bespeak your candid and tender consideration of this affecting and most awful subject, by remarking—

I. That God is slow to punish.

“He executeth not judgment speedily against the workers of iniquity.” He does punish; he shall punish; with reverence be it spoken, he must punish. Yet no hand of clock goes so slow as his hand of vengeance. Of that, the world, this city, and this church, are witnesses; each and all, speaker and hearer, are living witnesses. It is too common to overlook this fact; and, ignoring the kindness, patience, longsuffering, and warnings which precede the punishment, we are too apt to give the punishment itself our exclusive attention. What divine kindness is impressed on all God's works! Even the lion growls before he leaps, and before the snake strikes she springs her rattle.

Look, for example, on the catastrophe of the Deluge. And let not our attention be so engrossed by its dread and awful character, as to overlook all that preceded it, and see nothing but these devouring waters.

The waters rise till rivers swell into lakes, and lakes into seas, and along fertile plains the sea stretches out her arms to seize their flying population. Still the waters rise; and now, mingled with beasts that terror has tamed, men climb to the mountain tops, the flood roaring at their heels. Still the waters rise; and now each summit stands above them like a separate and sea-girt isle. Still the waters rise; and, crowding closer on the narrow spaces of lessening hill-tops, men and beasts fight for standing-room. Still the thunders roar, and the lightnings flash, and the waters rise, till the last survivor of the shrieking crowd is washed off, and the head of the highest Alp goes down beneath the wave. Now the waters rise no more. God's servant has done his work. He rests from his labours; and, all land drowned—all life destroyed—an awful silence reigning and a shoreless ocean rolling, Death for once has nothing to do, but ride in triumph on the top of some giant billow, which, meeting no coast, no continent, no Alp, no Andes to break upon, sweeps round and round the world.

We stand aghast at the scene; and as the corpses of gentle children and sweet infants float by, we exclaim, "Has God forgotten to be gracious—is his mercy clean gone for ever?" No; assuredly not. Where, then, is his mercy? Look here; behold this ark which, steered

by an invisible hand, comes dimly through the gloom. Lonely ship on a shoreless ocean, she carries mercy on board. Within walls that are pitched without and within, she holds safe the costliest freight that ever sailed the sea. The germs of the church are there—the children of the old world, and the fathers of the new. Suddenly, amid the awful gloom, as she drifts over that dead and silent sea, a grating noise is heard. Her keel has grounded on the top of Ararat. The door is opened; and beneath the sign of the olive branch, her tenants come forth from their baptismal burial, like life from the dead—like souls translated from a state of nature into the light and liberty of grace—like the saints when they shall rise at the summons of the trumpet to behold a new heaven and a new earth, and see the sign which these “grey fathers” hailed encircling a head that was crowned with thorns.

Nor is this all. Our Heavenly Father’s character is dear to us. And I must remind you that ere mercy flew, like the dove, to that welcome asylum, she had swept the wide world with her wings. Were there but eight, only eight saved? There were thousands, millions sought. Nor is it justice to God to forget how long a period of patience, and preaching, and warning, and compassion, preceded that dreadful deluge. Long before the lightning flashed from angry heavens, or thunders rolled along dissolving skies, or the clouds rained down death, or the floor and solid pavement of this earth, under the prodigious agencies at work, broke up, like the deck of a leaking ship, and the waters rushed from below to meet the waters from above, and

sink a guilty world ; long before the time when the ark floated away by town and tower, and those crowded hill-tops, where frantic groups were clustered, and amid prayers and curses, and shrieks, and shouts, hung out their signals of distress—very long before this, God had been calling an impenitent world to repentance. Had they no warning in Noah's preaching? Was there nothing to alarm them in the sight of the ark as storey rose upon storey ; not enough in the very sound of those ceaseless hammers to waken all but the dead? It was not till Mercy's arm grew weary, as she rung the warning bell, that, to use the words of my text, God "poured out his fury upon them." I appeal to the story of this awful judgment. True, for forty days it rained incessantly, and for one hundred and fifty days more "the waters prevailed on the earth;" but while the period of God's justice is reckoned by days, the period of his long-suffering was drawn out into years. There was a truce of one hundred and twenty-years between the first stroke of the bell and the first crash of the thunder. Noah grew grey preaching repentance. The ark stood useless for years, a huge laughing-stock for the scoffer's wit ; it was covered with the marks of age, and its builders with the contempt of the world ; and many a bitter sneer had these men to bear, as, pointing to the serene heavens above and an empty ark below, the question was put, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Most patient God ! Then, as now, thou wert slow to punish—"waiting to be gracious."

As that catastrophe and also many other judgments

prove—he is slow to anger. God does pour out his fury; but his indignation is the volcano that groans loud and long before it discharges the elements of destruction, and devastates with its lavas the vineyards at its feet. Where, when God's anger has burned hottest, was it ever known that judgment trode on the heels of sin? A period always intervenes; room is given for remonstrance on his part, and repentance upon ours. The stroke of judgment is indeed, like the lightning flash, irresistible, fatal; it kills,—kills in the twinkling of an eye. But the clouds from which it leaps are slow to gather, and thicken by degrees: and he must be intensely engaged with the pleasures, or engrossed in the business of the world, whom the flash and peal surprise. The gathering clouds, the deepening gloom, the still and sultry air, the awful silence, the big pattering rain-drops—these reveal his danger to the traveller, and warn him from river, road, or hill, to the nearest refuge. And heeded or unheeded, many are the warnings you get from God. As these prove, he has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked;” he is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to him and live.” No man ever yet went to hell, but trampling under foot ten thousand warnings—ten times ten thousand mercies.

Whatever injustice men may do themselves—however recklessly they may cast away salvation and their souls, I demand justice for him whose ambassador I am—for these mysteries of salvation of which I am a steward. No doubt he says, “I poured out my fury upon them;” but when was this done? Not till divine patience was

exhausted, and a succession of servants had been commissioned to warn, to preach, and plead with them. Remember the words of a weeping Saviour, as he looked on the city from the crest of Olivet—"O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Has language terms more tender or pathetic than these? Or those, in which God pours forth his affection for this very people—"When Israel was a child, then I loved him: I taught Ephraim also to go: taking them by their arms, I drew them with the cords of a man, and with bonds of love?" This language carries us into the tenderest scenes of domestic life. It reminds us of a mother, who unbosomed her grief to us, and, telling how one sweet child had been blighted in the bud, and how another had strayed from the paths of virtue, and how all the flowers of her cottage home had withered away, cried, as she bitterly looked back on departed joys, and wept, and wrung her hands—"These were happy days, when they were children at my knee." Like a father who hangs over some unworthy son, and, while his heart is torn by contending emotions, hesitates what to do—whether once and for ever to dismiss him, or to give him another trial—it is most touching to see God bending over sinners, and this flood of melting pathos bursting from his heart—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim?

Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man."

Let us do the same justice to our Father in heaven that we would render to an earthly parent. Would it be doing a father justice to look at him only when the rod is raised in his hand, and although the trembling lip, and weeping eyes, and choked utterance of his culprit boy, and a fond mother's intercession also, all plead with him to spare, he refuses—firmly refuses. In this, how stern he looks! But before you can know that father, or judge his heart aright, you should know how often ere this the offence had been forgiven; you should have heard with what tender affection he had warned his child; and above all, you should have stood at his closet door, and listened when he pleaded with God on behalf of an erring son. Justice to him requires, that you should have seen with what slow and lingering steps he went for the rod, the trembling of his hand, and how, as the tears fell from his eyes, he raised them to heaven and sought strength to inflict a punishment which, were it to serve the purpose, he would a hundred times sooner bear than inflict.

When Absalom—nursing his rage for months, and coolly planning the atrocious murder—slew his brother, David was so shocked, struck with such horror at the crime, that, although he permitted the assassin to return to Jerusalem, for two whole years he refused to see him. His son, his eldest son, his favourite son, he would

hold no intercourse with Absalom, nor speak to him, nor look on him. Would it be justice to David to confine our attention to this? Under that averted eye, and cold demeanour, and stern aspect, what a heart! Goaded on by ambition, this guilty man aims his next blow at a father's life—and falls; then how are the fountains of the great deep opened, what a flood of feeling! What is it now to David that the battle is won, his enemies are crushed, his crown is safe, his throne secure? Absalom is slain! “Oh Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, Oh Absalom, my son, my son!” And, would we do our heavenly Father justice, we must look on Calvary as well as on Eden. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” His Son indeed does not go up and down heaven weeping, wringing his hands, and, to the amazement of silent angels, crying, Would God I had died for man! A more amazing spectacle is here. He turns his back on heaven; he leaves the bosom and happy fellowship of his Father, he bares his own innocent breast to the sword of justice, and in the depths of a love never to be fathomed, he dies on that accursed tree, “the just for the unjust, that we might be saved!”

Through this vestibule of love, mercy, and long-suffering, we have thought it well to introduce you into the scenes of God's punitive justice. It is on iron, softened by the glowing fire, that impressions are made and left; and expecting good only when the terrible is associated with the tender, we have thought it well that

you should see how slow God is to smite, how swift God is to save. Fast fly the wings of mercy. Slow goes the hand of justice; like the shadow on the sun-dial ever moving, yet creeping onwards, with a motion all but imperceptible. Still let sinners stand in awe. Let it never be forgotten, that although God's patience is lasting, it is not everlasting. The hand of justice has not stopped; although imperceptibly, it steadily advances; by and by it reaches the tenth, eleventh, twelfth hour—and now the bell strikes. Then, unless you have fled to Christ, the blow which was so slow to fall, shall descend on the head of impenitence with accumulated force.

Observe—

II. How he punished his ancient people.

This is illustrated in many portions of Scripture. For example, "Now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Abraham. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee. The carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none

shall fray them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; for the land shall be desolate. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of Hosts. I will surely consume them, saith the Lord; there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. The Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones: for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it—the city, and those that dwell therein. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

These were the children of Abraham, beloved for the father's sake—the honoured custodiers of divine truth—God's chosen people, through whose line and lineage his Son was to appear. How solemn, then, and how appropriate, the question—“If such things were done

in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Look at Judah sitting amid the ruins of Jerusalem, her temple without a worshipper, her silent streets choked with the dead: look at that bound, weeping, bleeding remnant of a nation toiling, on its way to Babylon: look at these peeled and riven boughs; may I not warn you with the Apostle—"If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee."

We have seen an ancient mirror from the sepulchres of Egypt, in which some three thousand years ago, the swathed and mummied form beside whose dust it lay looked upon her face, to indulge her vanity or conceal the ravages of time. In the verses quoted, we have a mirror well nigh as old, in which the prophet shewed God's ancient people their likeness and their sins; and when I take it from the dead man's hand, to hold it up before you, may not some of you recognise, in the features which it presents, those of your own state and character? Are they not to be seen in such words as these—"I spake unto you, rising up early, but ye heard not; I called you, but ye answered not:" or these—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Are none of us the degenerate plants of a noble vine? Are there none of us, who, although trained to respect the Sabbath, have forgotten the lesson of our childhood? none with a holy picture of their early days yet fresh in memory, that exhibits a venerable father bending over the Bible, and, with his family around him, leading the domestic devotions, who have themselves no altar in their homes;—who have

a house, but no household God? Have none of us defrauded our children, not of ancestral lands, but of what is infinitely more valuable, an ancestral piety? On the walls of many a house from which piety has been expelled may we not read the words—"They did worse than their fathers?"

If we speak thus, it is for your good. We arm ourselves with these thunders, only, in the words of Paul, "to persuade you by the terrors of the Lord." We have no faith in terror disassociated from tenderness. Trusting more to drawing than driving men to Jesus, we entreat you to observe that he who is the good is also a most tender Shepherd. Among the hills of our native land I have met a shepherd far from the flock and folds, driving home a lost sheep—one which had "gone astray"—a creature panting for breath, amazed, alarmed, foot-sore; and when the rocks around rang loud to the baying of the dogs, I have seen them whenever it offered to turn from the path, with open mouth dash fiercely at its sides, and so hound it home. How differently Jesus brings back his lost ones! The lost sheep sought and found, he lifts it tenderly, lays it on his shoulder, and, retracing his steps, returns homeward with joy, and invites his neighbours to rejoice along with him. The "green pastures" where he feeds his flock, the rocks under whose grateful shadows they repose in noontide of the day, the flowery and fragrant banks of the streams where they drink, are disturbed by no scenes of violence nor sound of terror. Yes; Jesus rules his flock by love, not fear; and amid

the holy calm of sweet Sabbath mornings with some sweet lamb in his arms, its mother at his side, and the whole flock behind him; gentle of countenance, he may be seen at their head, conducting them to pastures, all sparkling with the dews of heaven, his rod their guard—his voice their guide. Catching grace from his lips, and tenderness from his looks, I would address you as becomes the servant of such a gentle, lowly, loving Master.

Yet, shall I conceal God's verity, and ruin men's souls to spare their feelings? Shall I sacrifice truth at the shrine of a false politeness? To hide what Jesus revealed were not to be more tender, but only less faithful than He. If the taste of these days were so degenerate as to frown down the honest preacher who should pronounce that awful word "Hell," and leave him to vacant pews, it were better, far better, that he should be as "one crying in the wilderness," and getting no response but the echo of empty walls, than that he should fail in proclaiming "the whole counsel of God." Apart from your interests, and looking exclusively at my own, how could I otherwise hold up these hands to say, "They are clean from the blood of all men?" How otherwise could the preacher turn from his unhappy head this closing curse—"If any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." Regard to myself, to you—regard to a gracious God, to a blessed Saviour—regard to all that is precious, solemn, sacred, eternal—these now compel me, although with trembling hands, to lift the veil.

If any are living without God, and Christ, and hope, and prayer, I implore them to look here : turn to this dreadful pit. How it gleams with fire ? How it resounds with wails and woful groans ! Now, while we stand together on its margin, or rather shrink back with horror, ponder, I pray you, the solemn question, “ who can lie down in everlasting burnings ? ”

It is alleged by travellers, that the ostrich, when hard pressed by its hunters, will thrust its head into a bush, and, without further attempt either at flight or resistance, quietly submit to the stroke of death. Men say that, having thus succeeded in shutting the pursuers out of its own sight, the bird is stupid enough to fancy that it has shut itself out of theirs, and that the danger, which it has ceased to see, has ceased to exist. We doubt that. God makes no mistakes ; and, guided as the lower animals are in all their instincts by infinite Wisdom, I fancy that a more correct knowledge of that creature would shew, that whatever stupidity there may be in the matter, lies not in the poor bird, but in man’s rash conclusion regarding it. Man trusts to hopes which fail him : the spider never ; she commits her weight to no thread which she has spun, till she has pulled on it with her arms, and proved its strength. Misfortune overtakes man unprovided and unprepared for it : not winter the active bee. Amid the blaze of Gospel light, man misses his road to heaven : in the starless night, the swallows cleave their way through the pathless air, returning to the window nook where they were nestled ; and through the darkest depths of ocean

the fish steer their course back to the river where they were spawned. Would we find folly, Solomon tells us where to seek it:—"Folly," says the wise man, "is bound up in the heart of a child:" and what is folded up there, like leaves in their bud, blows out in the deeds and habits of men. This poor bird, which has thrust its head into the bush, and stands quietly to receive the shot, has been hunted to death. For hours the cry of staunch pursuers has rung in its startled ear; for hours their feet have been on its weary track; it has exhausted strength and breath, and craft, and cunning, to escape; and even yet, give it time to breathe—grant it but another chance—and it is away with the wind; with wings outspread and rapid feet it spurns the burning sand. It is because escape is hopeless and death is certain that it has buried its head in that bush, and closed its eyes to a fate which it cannot avert. To man belongs the folly of closing his eyes to a fate which he can avert. He thrusts his head into the bush while escape is possible; and, because he can put death, and judgment, and eternity out of mind, lives as if there were neither a bed of death nor a bar of judgment. Be wise. Be men. Look your danger in the face. Anticipate the day when you shall behold a God in judgment and a world in flames; and flee to Jesus now. Escape from the wrath to come. To come? In a sense wrath has already come. The fire has caught, it has seized your garments; you are wrapt in flames. Oh! haste away, and throw yourselves into the fountain which has power to quench these fires, and cleanse you from all your sins.

GOD'S PUNITIVE JUSTICE.

Wherefore I poured my fury upon them, and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way, and according to their doings, I judged them.—
EZEKIEL xxxvi. 18, 19.

THE dank mossy sward is deceitful: its fresh and glossy carpet invites the traveller to leave the rough moorland track; and, at the first step, horse and rider are buried in the morass. The sea is deceitful. What rage, what stormy passions sleep in that placid bosom! and how often—as Vice serves her used-up victims—does she cast the bark that she received into her arms with sunny smiles a wreck upon the shore. The morning is oft deceitful. With bright promise of a brilliant day, it lures us from home; ere noon the sky begins to thicken, the sun looks sickly; the sluggish, heavily-laden clouds gather upon the hill-tops, the landscape all around closes in; the lark drops songless into her nest; the wind rises, moaning and chill; and at length—like adversities gathering round the grey head of age—tempests, storm, and rain thicken on the dying day. The desert is deceitful: it mocks the traveller with its mirage. How life kindles in his drooping eye, as he sees the playful waves chase each other to the shore, and the plumes of

the palm waving in the watery mirror! Faint, weary, parched, perishing with thirst, he turns to bathe and drink; and exhausting what little strength remains in pursuit of a phantom, unhappy man! he turns to die.

Deceitful above sward, or sea, or sky, or enchanted desert, is the heart of man; nor do I know a more marked or melancholy proof of this than that afforded by our light treatment of such weighty matters as sin and judgment. There is no exaggeration in the prophet's language—"The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Put a case:—The flames have broken out in some house, and the fire spreads fast; at midnight the roll of the drum wakens the sleeping streets—a fearful sound! soon followed by the hurried yet measured tramp of armed men, and the rush of a crowd, who, guided by a glare that illumines the sky, and turns night into ruddy day, pour on the scene of danger; and where the flames, bursting out from cellar to roof, shed their lurid light on glancing bayonets, strong arms below are working as for life, and daring men above, ever and anon lost among clouds of smoke, turn the stream upon the hissing fire. In this stirring scene, where is the tenant? How is he engaged? They thunder at the door; they call his name; they rear the ladder against the window; and bark, how they shout to him to wake, and haste, and flee, leaving house and furniture to the flames. They listen, but no answer. Alas! he has perished? Help has come too late? No; he lives; he has heard all that horrid din. He smells the smoke; he feels the floor grow hot, and hotter,

beneath his feet; and amid the thick and suffocating air the man gasps for breath. He has heard the cries of kindly neighbours; the glass of the window, as a strong hand dashes it in, falls at his feet; he sees the very ladder resting on its sill. Well; has some ruffian hand bound him neck and heel, that he does not move? or gagged him, that he gives back no answer? Not at all. The man is busy, very busy, ruminating on the question how the fire began; or with some pugnacious neighbour, as insane as himself, he is engaged in keen discussion about when and where it first broke out. Incredible! yet, incredible as that appears, so deceitful is this heart, that something less excusable and more incredible still daily meets us in the folly, shall I call it the insanity, of thousands? God has sounded the alarum. Roused from sleep—in some sense convinced of sin—in some measure awake to danger—the dream of safety broken in upon—warned that there is no time to spare—with the flames of wrath above, beneath, around, blocking up all the ordinary avenues of escape—the first, if not the only question, should be, “Oh, Sirs, what shall I do? Where shall I turn? Quick; speak, this moment say, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’” Yet, when the question, how to escape from the impending danger, is so pressing, hours, days, years, are wasted in inquiries and discussions such as this—How the race came to be exposed to it.

We leave theologians to settle the metaphysics of the Fall. *Their* business may be to know how we became sinners; *our* first, great, immediate business, is

to know how we are to be saved. Leave those who have reached the land to settle how and on what reef the vessel struck: the question with us, who still cling to the shrouds, or are battling with the surf, is, how to gain yonder blessed shore. In God's name, and by his help, get the fire put out; and then, when the flames are quenched, it will be time enough to consider how they were kindled. Tie the bleeding artery; and when life is saved, settle, if you can, how it was wounded. When you have plucked the drowning man from the water, and laid him on the bank, and the colour flushes again on his cheek, and the pulse beats again at his wrist, and speech again returns to these blue and livid lips, then may you speculate on how he fell into the flood. When, in spite of Satan, and by God's gracious help, we have wakened some careless one to care about his soul, it is one of the devil's wiles to distract his attention by such subjects, and amid the mazes of their inextricable labyrinths, to bewilder him, who should be pressing on to salvation at the top of his speed. I would have the man who is engaged in such an enterprise to give these questions in the meanwhile the go-by—and for once to apply well, words so often applied ill—"I will hear thee again on this matter:" "when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." These are profound subjects; worthy of the investigations of angels and exalted saints. And although we could not apply to their study the words of Nehemiah—"I have a great work to do; therefore I cannot come down," yet in saving ourselves and others, I am sure

that there is enough to do, without occupying our attention with unsatisfactory speculations on moral evil, and the entrance of sin into our world. In the first place, few have time and fewer still the talent for such studies. In the second place, although we had, we should find that, like going down into a coal-pit or the depths of ocean, the further we descended the darker it grew: and so we should fare no better than the fallen intelligences described by Milton:—

“Others apart sate on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate—
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute—
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.
Of good and evil much they argued there—
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.”

In the third place, we may postpone these speculations till we enjoy the leisure of eternity, and can examine subjects so obscure in the clear light of heaven. Meanwhile let it content us to be assured, that the extent of our knowledge shall correspond to the height of our elevation. As a man, from the bartisan of some lofty tower, or the summit of some loftier mountain, commands a wider landscape, and, tracing the course of rivers, the ranges of hills, the outlines and indentations of the coast, obtains a far more extensive view of these objects, and a much clearer conception of their relative bearings, than he enjoyed in the plain below, so, while some subjects, like the snowy summits of the Himalayas or Andes, may remain for ever inaccessible,

yet, once raised to heaven, we shall understand many mysteries, and solve many questions, of which it is best now to say, "Such knowledge is too high for me; I cannot attain unto it." A child seated on the shoulders of a man sees further than the man himself; an infant standing on the top of a mountain very much further than a giant at its base: and even so, the lisping babe, whom Jesus has taken from a mother's bosom to his own, excels in science the profoundest of philosophers and in divinity the greatest of divines. In heaven we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known; there "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold."

In considering at greater length the punitive justice of God, I shall not attempt to offer any full or satisfactory explanation of what is beyond our understanding. How a wise, holy, good, and gracious God permitted what he certainly could have prevented—permitted sin to exist at all—is a mystery now and may remain one for ever. With others I might contribute some attempts to solve that difficulty; but I believe that, like all preceding efforts, they would throw no more light on this vast and mysterious subject than a candle sheds on a widely extended landscape veiled in mist or wrapped in midnight darkness. Amid these awful and often painful mysteries, we can only cling to our holy faith, and cherish an unshaken confidence in this, that the Judge of all the earth doeth right. God is a king who can do no wrong.

To the man, then, who asks, Why am I born with

a bias to sin? Why has another's hand been permitted to sow germs of evil in me? Why should I, who was no party to the first covenant, be buried in its ruins? If in reply to the query—"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel: the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" The Bible says, "As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any longer to use this proverb in Israel," why, then, do I suffer for Adam's sin? Why, most virulent of poisons! should this sin infect the blood of a hundred generations? Why should I suffer for a crime committed six thousand years ago, and to which I no more consented than to the murder of Abel, or the massacre in Bethlehem? To these questions this is my reply: I shrink from sitting in judgment upon my judge. Clouds and darkness are round about Jehovah now; but I feel confident that, when the veil of this present economy is rent, and expiring Time, echoing the cry of the cross, exclaims, "It is finished," it shall be seen that righteousness and judgment are the pillars of Jehovah's throne—that "there is no unrighteousness with God." These questions open up an abyss respecting which man's business is to adore and not explore; and to them, meanwhile, I have no other answer than the great Apostle's, "Who art thou, O man! that repliest against thy Maker? Shall the thing made say to him who made it, why hast thou made me thus?"

But although the permission of sin is a mystery, the fact of its punishment is no mystery at all; and, while

every answer to the question, How did God permit sin? leaves us unsatisfied, to my mind nothing is plainer than this, that, whatever was his reason for permitting it to exist, God could not permit it to exist unpunished. In proof of that, I observe—

I. The truth of God requires the punishment of sin.

“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering on a mountain that I will tell thee of.” Startling announcement! It is not possible to suppose that the alarmed, amazed, confounded patriarch received it at once—believed it without a dreadful struggle. No; there never rung from mailed hand or battle-axe such a stunning blow. What father doubts that it made Abraham stagger, and brought to his knees this man of stoutest faith? I think I hear him saying, “Take Isaac—take my son, the son of my love, the son of promise, the miraculous gift of heaven—offer Isaac for a burnt-offering! Surely I dream. What a dreadful fancy? Did my ears deceive me? No: there was a voice; I heard it. It sounded like the voice of God: but could it be so? Was it for this that angels announced his birth? Was it to be thus rudely shaken off, that the old stock was made to blossom, and this sweet fruit to grow on a withered tree? Although this trembling hand could plunge the knife into the bosom of my son, would it not be most honourable to God to conclude that some demon, with false and wicked mimicry, had borrowed his voice to lure me into a foul

and monstrous crime, and, getting me to embrue these hands in Isaac's blood, by this horrid sacrifice to quench the light of heaven and the hope of earth—in this sweet bud to crush an unblown salvation and unborn Saviour?" Now, whatever room Abraham might have had for doubt—whatever struggle faith had with unbelief in that father's heart—we have no room nor pretence to doubt that, however terrible its punishment, God has threatened to punish sin, and, true to his word, shall pour out his fury on the sinner's head. Christ is offered; and ye cannot escape, if ye neglect this great salvation.

Had that truth been written only in one solitary passage—within the whole compass of the Bible had there been but a single line to that effect—we might have succeeded in persuading ourselves that its sense was mistaken, and its terms misunderstood. But is it so? Ah! no: there is text upon text, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." God has recorded his irrevocable resolution, not in one, but in a hundred passages; and reiterated in a thousand ways the awful sentence—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Some have fancied that they honour God most when, sinking all other attributes in mercy—indiscriminating mercy—they represent him as embracing the world in his arms—and receiving to his bosom with equal affection the sinners that hate, and the saints that love him. They cannot claim originality for this idea. Its authorship belongs to the "father of lies." Satan

said so before them. It is the identical doctrine that damned this world. The serpent said to the woman, "Thou shalt not surely die." Are your hopes of salvation resting on such a baseless fancy? If so, you have not surely considered in what aspect this theory presents that God for whose honour you profess such tender regard. We almost shrink from explaining it. You save the creature, but at a price still more costly than was paid for sinners upon the cross of Calvary. Is there something dearer than life to me?—to God there was something more precious than the blood even of his Son. I can part with my life, but not my honour;—and God could part with his Son, but not with his truth. But let sin go unpunished, either in person or substitute; this saves the sinner—no doubt of that; but at what price? You save the creature's life at the expense of the Creator's honour. Your scheme exalts man; but far more than man is exalted is God degraded. By it no man is lost; but there is a greater loss—something more awful happens. The truth of God is lost; and in that loss his crown is spoiled of its topmost jewel, and the throne of the universe shaken to its foundations. It is as manifest as daylight that God's truth and your scheme cannot stand together. "Liar" stands against either God or you; and, in the words of the Apostle, you "make God a liar."

Nor is that all; my faith has lost the very rock it stood on, and stood on—as I flattered myself—stedfast, immovable. For, however awful the threatenings in his Word may be, if God is not true to them, what

security have I that he will be true to its gracious promises? The rod which bends in one direction will prove as supple in another; and, since the truth of a Heaven stands upon the very same foundation as the truth of a Hell—the one resting upon the promise, the other upon the threatening, and both alike upon the simple word of God—why, then, the scheme which quenches the fears of the wicked extinguishes the hopes of the just. If he that believeth not shall not be condemned, farewell—a long and sad farewell—to the confidence I cherished, that he who believeth shall be saved. I cannot consent that you should thus pull down my heaven, to build with its ruins, not a palace to justice, but an asylum for crime. Away with such a scheme. It is fatal to the peace of God's people. It is essentially blasphemous and dishonouring to their God. It makes the true God a liar. Making him do wrong, how can it be right? making him untrue, it must be itself untrue. We reject it with horror. It is a snare of the Evil One; and happy would we be to set loose its captives, and send them away singing, as on wings of faith they soared to heaven, "My soul is escaped as a bird out of the fowler's snare: the snare is broken, and I am escaped."

II. The love of God requires that sin should be punished.

You may start at this. Love require punishment? How strange! Had we said the justice, or holiness, or

purity of God, we, no doubt, should have used an expression less startling, and more sure to command a ready assent. These attributes present strong positions, within which it may be admitted that we could entrench this doctrine,—impregnable to all assaults. On that very account it is that in this brief discussion we pass these by, and, confident in the strength of our cause, select, of very purpose, although some may think unwisely, what they deem the weakest argument and point of defence. Now I find one of the strongest and most affecting proofs that the impenitent and unbelieving shall not go unpunished, just in that tenderest of all subjects, the love of God; and with the man who uses this love to prove that sin shall go unpunished, I think that I could close; and having wrested that weapon from his hand, take off the head of his argument with his own sword. I say of this love of God, what David said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like that—give it me."

Lend me your candid attention, and it will not be difficult to convince you, that the love of God—which is a sevenfold shield to the believer—not merely consents to, but demands, the condemnation, as it aggravates the guilt, of the impenitent. Let me at once prove and illustrate the point by a piece of plain analogy:—This city, its neighbourhood, nay, the whole land, is shaken by the news of some most cruel, bloody, monstrous crime. Fear seizes the public mind; pale horror sits on all men's faces; doors are double barred; and justice lets loose the hounds of law on the track of the criminal. At length, to the relief and joy of all honest citizens, he

is caught. He is tried, condemned, laid in irons, and waits but the sentence to be signed. To save or slay—to hang or pardon—is now the question with him whose prerogative it is to do either; and when the law is left to take its course, by what motive is the sovereign impelled to shut up his bowels of mercy, and sign the warrant for execution? Is it want of pity? No; the pen is taken with reluctance; it trembles in his hand, and tears of compassion for this guilty wretch drop upon the page. It is not so much abhorrence of the guilty, as love of the innocent, and regard for their lives, peace, purity, and honour, that dooms the man to death. If he were pardoned, and his crime allowed to go unpunished, neither man's life nor woman's virtue were safe; unless this felon dies, the peace and purity of a thousand happy families lie open to foul attack. Love for those who have the best claim on a sovereign's protection, requires that justice take her course, and the guilty die. That the community may live in peace, each man sitting beneath his own vine and fig tree—that the citizen may feel safe in the bosom of his family—that streets may be safe to walk on—that beds may be safe to lie in—that our land may be a country fit to live in—crime must be punished. The magistrate who would reward obedience must punish rebellion; nor can he be a praise and protection to them that do good, but by making himself a terror to them that do evil.

There are scenes of domestic suffering which present another, no less convincing, and more touching analogy. I refer to those distressing cases where natural affection

yields to the holiest parental duty ; and where, although she thereby inflicts on her own bosom a wound balms cannot heal and time never closes, Love seizes the knife, and, lest the canker should extend to the other branches, lops off a once pleasant bough from the family tree. It has happened that, from love and regard to the interests of his other children—to save them from a brother's contamination—a kind parent has felt constrained to banish his son, and forbid him a father's house. How sad to think that he may be lost ! The dread of that goes like a knife into the heart ; yet, bitter truth ! painful conclusion ! it is better that one child be lost than a whole family be lost. These lambs claim protection from the wolf. He must be driven forth from the fold ; Love herself, while she weeps, demands this sacrifice ; and, just because it is most lacerating, most excruciating, to a parent's heart, it is in such a case the highest and holiest exercise of parental love to bar the door against a child. There have been parents so weak and foolish as to peril the morals, the fortunes, the souls of their other children, rather than punish one ; and in consequence of this I have seen sin, like a fever, infect every member of the family, and vice ferment and spread till it had leavened the whole lump. Divine Love, however, is no blind Divinity : and that love being as wise as tender, sinners may rest assured, that out of mere pity to them, God will neither sacrifice the interests, nor peril the happiness of his people. Even bleeding, dying redeeming love with her own hand shall bolt the door of heaven, and from its happy, holy precincts, exclude all

that could hurt or defile. Stern words these ! and when Love puts on her armour, to fight, what hope for the man who has compelled her to be his enemy ? Having armed Her against you, where now are you to fly ? Look at this scene of judgment. He who died on the cross occupies the throne. Love incarnate presides at that august tribunal, and I see the print of the nail on the very hand which waves away the lost into perdition. The voice which so often invited the impenitent now condemns and commands them to depart. Calmly, serenely anticipating that day, Faith says, "It is God that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ?" But if Jesus Christ condemn, who shall justify ? If He spare not, who shall save ? From the wrath of the Lamb which impenitence has changed into the wrath of a Lion, despair turns away a face covered with the blackness of darkness, to wring her hands and cry, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ?" If the Lamb and love of God be our adversary, our case is desperate. Oh ! take warning in Time, that you perish not for Eternity. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

III. Unless sin is to be awfully punished, the language of Scripture appears extravagant.

To a man of tender feelings, next to the suffering is the sight of pain. Nor, but for your good, would I ask

any one to cast even a hurried glance on those appalling scenes which the Bible describes. But if men, for the mere gratification of taste—if the lovers of the fine arts—crowd to some picture of the damned—a scene of the last Judgment painted by a master's hand, where hideous demons torment shrieking victims, and drag the seven deadly Sins down into the gulf of fire—when, as far as the heavens do the earth, the preacher's object transcends the painter's, and the salvation of souls the gratification of taste—when my object is not to please your fancy, but to profit your souls—shall that be condemned in the pulpit which is so much applauded in the painting? Where the highest interests are at stake, shall the preacher be judged harsh, and shewing no regard to feeling and propriety, because I ask you to turn your eyes on this spectacle—on the worm that never dieth, and this fire that is never quenched! Oh! let me beseech, implore you, to read with tears and prayers those passages of Scripture that reveal the miseries of the lost. Blot not from your minds what you cannot blot out of the Book of God.

What is so sad—what does so strongly and mournfully illustrate the deceitfulness of this wicked heart—as the entertainment which men extract from the solemnities of judgment? Only think of those, who turn away with ill-disguised distaste from the very mention of such subjects in the house of God, crowding a brilliant saloon, to hear this same judgment set to music, and listen, with loud and rapturous applause, to the hired musicians, who give a bold (shall I say profane?) imitation

of the trumpet that rends the grave, of the thunders that announce the Judge, the song of adoring angels, the shouts of ransomed saints, and—for anything I know—the despairing shrieks of the damned! Think of criminals leaving the bar to set their sentence to music? When their life is a matter of hours, and its few remaining sands should be given to prayer and the Holy Bible, think of felons shut up in a cell and covering its walls with a wretched caricature of their judge, the gallows, the mighty crowd, the victim turning round on his cord, with eyeballs that protrude beneath the white cap, and limbs convulsed in the spasm and agony of death!

The sufferings and misery which await the impenitent and unbelieving, God has painted in most appalling colours. They are such that to save us from them, his Son descended from these heavens and expired upon a cross. They are such that when Paul thought of the lost, he wept like a woman. A dauntless man, who shook his chain in the face of kings—whose spirit no sufferings could subdue, and whose heart no dangers could appal—who stood as unmoved amid a thousand perils as ever rock amid a thousand billows—he could not contemplate the fate of the wicked without the deepest emotion: his tears fell fast and thick upon the page where he wrote, “of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, whose god is their belly, whose end is destruction.”

What horror did David feel at the sight and fate of sinners? With his face turned up to heaven you see a blind man approach the edge of an awful precipice:

every step brings him nearer—still nearer, the brink. Now he reaches it : he stands on the grassy edge. Oh for an arm to reach him—for a voice to warn him—for a blow to send him staggering back upon the ground ! But he has lifted his foot ; it is projected beyond the brink ; another moment, a breath of wind, the least change of balance, and he is whirling twenty fathoms down. You stop your ears, shut your eyes, turn away your head : horror has taken hold of you. And such were David's feelings when he contemplated the fate of the wicked : " Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law : rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law, O God." The wrath of God is the key to the Psalmist's sorrow, to an Apostle's tears, to the bloody mysteries of the Cross. That was the necessity which drew a Saviour down. Had that wrath been either tolerable or terminable, the sword of Justice had never been dyed with the blood nor sheathed in the body of her noblest victim ; and if there is a need be for the lightest cross that lies on a good man's lot, how great the necessity for that upon which the Saviour died ! God is not willing that you should perish, and by these terrors he would persuade you to accept salvation. Meditate on these words : pray over them—" Woe to the man that striveth with his maker !" " Who can lie down in everlasting burnings ?" " The wicked shall be cast into hell and all the nations that forget God."

Rather than that you should perish, even thus, although I should pain, I would persuade you. Oh ! there are terrors

enough in the Bible to make a man's hair stand on end. Surely, were God but for one moment to let us hear the wail and shrieking of the lost, how would that sound, more terrible than Egypt's cry, rouse the student at his books, arrest the foot of dancer in the ball, stop armies in the very fury of the fight. Calling a sleeping world from their beds, it would bend the most stubborn knees, and extort from all this one loud cry, "Lord save me, I perish!" Still it is not terror which is the power—the mighty power of God. The Gospel, like most medicines for the body, is of a compound nature; but whatever else enters into its composition, its curative element is love. No man yet was ever driven to heaven: he must be drawn to it. I wish to draw you. The Gospel has in it elements of terror, no doubt. But it is like our atmosphere—occasionally riven by the thunder, and illumined by the fatal flash—at times the path of the stealthy pestilence—charged with elements of destruction, and impregnated with the seeds of disease; but how much more a great magazine of health, filled with the most harmonious sounds, fragrant with the sweetest odours, hung with golden drapery, the pathway of sunbeams, the womb of showers, the feeder of fertilising streams, the parent of harvests, and the fountain of all Earth's life! And, just as in that atmosphere, which God has wrapped around this world, there is much more health than sickness, much more food than famine, much more life than death, so in the Bible there is much more love than terror.

The terror is not only *subordinate* to love, but *sub-*

servient to it. God, indeed, tells us of hell, but it is to persuade us to fly to heaven; and, as a skilful painter fills the background of his picture with his darker colours, God introduces the smoke of torment and the black thunder-clouds of Sinai, to give brighter prominence to Jesus, the cross of Calvary, and his love to the chief of sinners. His voice of terror is like the scream of the mother-bird when the hawk is in the sky. She alarms her brood that they may run and hide beneath her feathers; and as I believe that God had left that mother dumb unless he had given her wings to cover them, I am sure that He, who is very "pitiful," and has no pleasure in any creature's pain, had never turned our eyes to the horrible gulf unless for the voice that cries, "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." We had never heard of sin had there been no Saviour. We had never heard of hell had there been no heaven. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof;" and never had Bible light been flashed before the eyes of the sleeping felon to wake him from his happy dream, but that he might see the smiling form of Mercy, and hear her, as she says with finger pointing the way, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door."

GOD'S MOTIVE IN SALVATION.

I do this for mine holy name's sake.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 22.

THERE is a land lying beneath a burning sky, where the fields are seldom screened by a cloud, and almost never refreshed by a shower; and yet Egypt—for it is of it I speak—is as remarkable for the fertile character of its soil as for the hoar antiquity of its history. At least it was so in days of old, when hungry nations were fed by its harvests, and its fields were the granaries of ancient Rome. Powers so prolific Egypt owed to the Nile—that river whose associations carry us upward to the beginning of all human history—upon whose banks, in the sepulchres of forgotten kings, stand the proudest monuments of human vanity—a river, the very name of which recalls some of the grandest scenes that have been acted on the stage of time. The Nile *is* Egypt: in the course of long ages it has deposited her soil, and by an annual overflow it maintains her fertility. The limits of that flood are the limits of life and verdure; and without her Nile—that great artery of vegetable life—she would be another Sahara—a vast expanse of burning and barren sands. Humbled as she now is, let this gift of heaven be improved, as of old, by the skill

and industry of her inhabitants, and, vivified by a free and Christian government, Egypt would rise from the sepulchres of her kings, and take her place once more in the van of nations. The Truth shall prove her resurrection. The Gospel shall restore her to life and prosperity; and the day is coming when that land—rich now only in memories of the past, famous now only for her temples and gods, her pyramids and dusty tombs, for her throne of the Pharaohs, for her sacred stream, for the wonders God wrought of old in the field of Zoan, and, most dear above all to Christian hearts, for the asylum she opened to an infant Saviour—shall fulfil a noble destiny. Her day approaches. These prophecies regarding her wait their accomplishment—"The Lord shall be known in Egypt;" and, "Blessed be Egypt my people."

From the earliest ages the source of the Nile was regarded with intensest interest. Whence it sprung and how its annual flood was swelled, were the subjects of eager but ungratified curiosity. One traveller after another had attempted to reach its cradle, and had failed or fallen in the attempt; and when—forcing his way upwards through many difficulties, and travelling along its banks, from where, by many mouths, it disgorged its waters into the sea, till its ample volume had shrunk into the narrowness of a mountain stream—our hardy countryman at length stood beside the long sought for fountain, this achievement won for him an immortal reputation. I can fancy the pride with which, first of travellers, he looked on that mysterious fountain. How sweet its waters tasted! How he enjoyed his triumph,

as he sat down by the cradle of a river, which had fed the millions of successive generations, and in days long gone by had saved in famine the race which gave a Redeemer to the world!

Now, what this river, which turns barren sands into the richest soil, is to Egypt, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to the world. It flows through the earth, the "river of the waters of life." Whether, transplanted to heaven, they now bloom there, or are still in the nurseries of earth, every plant of grace owes to the Gospel its existence and renown. Observe, however, that—although the parent of those harvests which angels shall reap and the heavens receive—no more in the case of the Gospel than of the Nile does the bounty of heaven supersede human exertions. No; but on earth's improvement of heaven's bounty the blessings of both are commonly suspended. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich:" and as it is according to the industry or indolence of the inhabitants that Egypt's river flows through barren sands or waters smiling fields, so is it with the Gospel. It is a blessing only where it is sedulously and prayerfully improved; and when, like the overflowings of the Nile, which are conducted along their channels to irrigate its banks, the "living waters," through the use of means, are turned on our hearts and habits. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

Now, if it is interesting to trace a Nile, or Ganges, or Amazon to its source, how much more interesting to a Christian to explore the stream of eternal life, and

trace it upward till we have reached its fountain. Bruce discovered—or thought he had discovered—the springs of Egypt's river: he found them away among cloud-capped mountains, at an elevation of many thousand feet above the plains they watered. Great men have been born in lowly circumstances; but all great rivers boast of a lofty descent. It is when the traveller has left smiling valleys far beneath him, and toiling along rugged glens, and, pressing through deep mountain gorges, he at length reaches the chill shores of an icy sea, that he stands at the source of the alpine river, which, cold as the snows that feed it, and a full grown stream at its birth, rushes out from the caverns of the hollowed glacier. But the river of such a lofty birth-place is only a humble image of salvation. How high *its* source! “He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” The stream of mercy flows from the throne of the Eternal; and here we seem to stand by its mysterious fountain: in contemplating the words of the text, we look upon its spring—“I do this for mine holy name's sake.”

In now entering on the question, What moved God to save man? let us—

I. Attend to the expression “my name's sake.”

This is a comprehensive, a most comprehensive term. It indicates much more than what, in common language, is involved in a name. That may convey

much meaning. "Adam," for instance, means "clay;" made of earth, our first parent receives a name that reminds him of his humble origin. "Isaac," again, means "laughter;" and in her son's name God rebuked Sarah for the unbelieving merriment with which, when listening with a woman's curiosity behind the door, she heard of her coming child, and how fruit in her should grow on such an old and withered stock. "Moses," again, means "drawn from the water;" and that name reminded him, who was to deliver others, how he himself had been delivered from death. And—to come to the name that is above every name,—in "Jesus," our Lord received a name that revealed his office and anticipated his work—the angel said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Commonly, however a man's name sheds no light on his properties, character, works, or life. It is nothing more than an appellation which he receives in infancy, and receives—since the flower is still in the bud—before his fortune can be told, or his character even guessed at. "What's in a name?" Its chief end is just to prevent confusion by distinguishing one person from another.

The name of God, however, as employed by the sacred writers, has many and most important meanings. 'In the 20th Psalm, for instance, it embraces all the attributes of the Godhead. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;" that is—if paraphrased—may his arms be around thee; may his wisdom guide thee; may his power support

thee ; the bounty of God supply thy wants ; the mercy of God forgive thy sins ; may the shield of heaven cover, and all its blessings crown thy head. In the days of miracles, again, the name of Jesus carried with it the idea of his authority, and of the efficacy of his power. Uttered by the lips of faith, it was a word of resistless might. It healed disease, shed light on the darkness of the blind, and breathed life into the cold form of death ; it mastered devils, controlled the powers of hell, and commanded into immediate obedience the wildest elements of nature. Like Pharaoh's signet on Joseph's hand, he who used that name in faith, was gifted for the time with his master's power ; so that whatever he loosed on earth was loosed in heaven ; and whatever he bound on earth was bound in heaven. Standing over a cripple—one impotent from his mother's womb—Peter said, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And lo ! deformity instantly changes into strength and gracefulness ; he who had never stood erect till now, bounds from the earth, and, in the joyful play of new-born faculties, walking, leaping, dancing, singing, he ushers the Apostles into the astonished temple. Powerful as was this name when used by faith, yet on unbelieving lips no name more useless ; like a residuum from which the spirit has been evaporated, or a body bereft of life, it possessed no virtue or power at all. There was no charm in the mere name, either to pour light on a blind man's eyeball, or restore vigour to a withered limb. See how Sceva's seven sons learn that

to their cost! Profaning this holy name, and employing it in the black arts of witchcraft, they use it to cast out a devil; and—themselves Satan's servants—they find that "Beelzebub casts not out devils." "Jesus I know, and Paul I know," says the Evil One, "but who are ye?" Hell disowns their authority: the Demon defies them; he leaps on them with the fury of a savage beast; and—theirs the fate of the engineer who is hoisted on his own petard—they are driven off the field, covered with disgrace and wounds.

Again in Micah iv. 5, where it is said, "We will walk in the name of the Lord," the expression assumes a new meaning, and indicates the laws, statutes, and commandments of God. Again, in the blessed promise, "In all places where I record my name, there will I come unto thee and bless thee," the expression bears yet another meaning: it stands for God's ordinances and worship—rearing, as it were, by the hands of faith, a holy temple out of the rudest edifice, and converting into heaven-consecrated churches those rocky fastnesses and lonely moors where our fathers worshipped in the dark days of old. Contenting ourselves with these illustrations of the various meanings of this expression in Scripture, I now remark, that here the "name" of God comprehends everything, which directly or remotely affects the divine honour and glory; whatever touches, to use the words of our catechism, "His titles, attributes, ordinances, word or works; or anything whereby God maketh himself known."

II. We are to understand that the motive which moved God to save man was regard to his own glory.

“Where is boasting then?” we may ask with the Apostle, and leave him to answer, “it is excluded.” If salvation is not of merit, but of mercy—not of earth, but heaven—not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God—“Not by might nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts,” boasting is, and must be, “excluded.” Grace glorifies man, no doubt; but for what purpose? that he may glorify God. It saves man, but saves him that he may sing, not his own praises, but a Saviour’s. It exalts man, but exalts him, that, like an exhalation, sun-drawn from the ground, and raised to heaven, each of us may form a sparkling drop in the bow, which encircles the head that God crowns with glory, and man once crowned with thorns. Even our Lord himself, although in a sense the “fellow” of his Father, and reckoning it no robbery to make himself equal with God, kept his eye steadily on that lofty mark. His Father’s, not his own glory, was the burden of Jesus’ prayers and the end of Jesus’ sufferings: born for it in a stable, he bled for it on a cross, and was buried for it in a sepulchre. When, on the solemn eve of his last and most awful sufferings, our champion buckled on his armour for the closing struggle, ere he joined battle with men, death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, was not this his prayer—“Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee?” Dutiful Son! Pattern of

filial piety ! Thou didst forget thine own in a mother's sufferings ; and wast more concerned for thy father's honour than thine own.

This doctrine, that God saves men for his own glory, is a grand, and very precious truth ; yet there is a way of stating it which seems as offensive as it is unscriptural. Concave mirrors magnify the features nearest to them into undue and monstrous size ; and in common mirrors, ill cast and of uneven surface, the most beautiful face is distorted into deformity. Now there are some good men whose minds appear to be of such a cast and character. Not exhibiting the truths of the Bible in their proper harmony and proportions, they represent Jesus Christ in this matter of salvation as affected by no motive whatever but a regard to his Father's glory, and even God himself as moved only by respect to his own. Excluding from their view the commiseration and love of God, or reducing these into shrunk and very small dimensions, they magnify one doctrine at the expense of another, and, thereby go to annihilate some of the most sacred and tender ties which bind a believer to his God. Now, it appears to us that this ill-proportioned theology—this doctrine that the only motive which God had in redemption was a regard to his own glory—receives no countenance from the Bible. Does not God “pity us, as a father pitieth his children ?” Taught to address him by the endearing appellation of Father, Oh, what affection, love, and loving-kindness, are expressed in a term so tender ! And if, on seeing some earthly father, whom a child's scream has alarmed, rush up the blazing

stair, or leap into the boiling flood, it were wrong, it were cruel, it were a shame, to suspect him of being dead to affection—of being moved to this noble act by no other motive than a regard to his own honour—by no other voice than the calm command of duty—how much more wrong were it to harbour such unworthy suspicions of “our Father who is in heaven.”

I know that we should approach a theme so high with the deepest reverence. It becomes us to speak on such a subject, and, indeed, on anything that touches the secret movements of the Divine mind, with profound humility. Yet, reasoning from the form of the shadow to the object which projects it—from man to God—I would venture to say, that it is with the Divine Being as with us, when we are moved to a single action by the combined influence of various motives. To borrow an example from the place I fill:—The minister appears before his assembled people to preach; and, in doing so, if worthy of his office, he is affected by a variety of motives. Love to God, love to Jesus, love to sinners, love to saints, a regard to God's glory, and regard to man's good: these, like the air, water, light, heat, electricity, gravitation, which act together in the process of vegetation, may all combine to form one sermon. They are present, and act not as conflicting but concurring motives in the preacher's breast. This difference, however, there is between us and God, that although our motives—like the Rhone, which is formed of two rivers, the one pure as the sky above it, the other turbid and discoloured—are ever mixtures of good and evil, all the

emotions of the Divine mind, all the influences that move God to action, are of the purest nature.

God cherishes, indeed, such respect to his own glory, that, had the salvation of the world been incompatible with that end—this world had been left to perish. Dreadful thought! How should we adore and extol the wisdom which discovered a way to harmonise the glory of God, and the good of men! He was undoubtedly moved by regard to both, and it is an imperfect vision that sees but one motive. This subject resembles those binary stars which appear to the naked eye as but one, yet when brought into the field of the telescope, resolve themselves into two orbs, that roll in their brightness and beauty around a common but invisible centre. Blessed be his holy name! “He so *loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but should have everlasting life.” “He commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Never, therefore, let us exalt this doctrine of the divine glory, at the expense of the divine love. His love to sinners is his mightiest, his heart-softening, as an old writer called it, his heart-breaking argument; and it were doing God, his blessed Gospel, and our own souls the greatest injustice, if we should overlook the love that gives Divinity its name, and which, sending in his Son, a Saviour from the Father’s bosom, was eulogised by an Apostle as possessed of a “height, and depth, and breadth, and length, which passeth knowledge.”

III. Observe, that in saving man for his "holy name's sake," or for his own honour and glory, God exhibits the mercy, holiness, love, and other attributes of the Godhead.

The truth is, that God saves man from much the same reasons as at first he made him. What moved God to make him? The ball rolls forward over the ground, and the ship moves onward through the sea, by virtue of an external force—the hand projects the one, and the wind, caught in her sails, impels the other. But no foreign agent imparted an impulse to creating power; nor did any one command or compel God to make man. It is his prerogative to command—the creature's duty to obey. Why, then, did He make man? Did He need to make him? Was it with Him as with some lordly master, who depends for his comfort on his servants?—as with a king, whose glory lies in the number of his attendants or the brilliancy of his court?—as with the greatest general, who owes his triumphs to the bravery of his soldiers, and who, however great his military genius, would win no battles and wear no laurels without an army at his back? Assuredly not. "Our goodness extendeth not to thee;" our wealth makes God no richer, our praise makes Him no happier. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak. I will take no bullock out of thy house, or he-goat out of thy fold; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were

hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."

What moved God, then, to make man, or, to enlarge the question so as to embrace creation, when there was neither world rolling, nor sun shining, nor angel singing—when there was neither life nor death, nor birth nor burial, nor sight nor sound, no wave of ocean breaking, no wing of seraph moving—when, as in a past eternity, God dwelt alone in silent, solemn, awful, but complacent solitude, what moved Him to make creatures at all, with these bright worlds, suns, and systems, to garnish the empty heavens, and people a lonely universe? These are the deep things of God, and it becomes us with our finite and fallible minds to approach them modestly. If the great fabric of nature, if the machine of providence, with its wheels rolling within wheels in many and complicated parts—if these, and the scheme of redemption, are full of mysteries inscrutable—how much more the vast mind that designed and executed them! The meanest of his works are full of Himself, and of mysteries which, when apprehended, are not comprehended. I adore divinity in a humble daisy. And if in the creature, that lives for a day and dances in a sun-beam, I see the wisdom that made the sun—how can I lay aside the telescope by which I have held communion with the distant heavens, or the microscope that shews a world of wonders in one drop of water, without concluding that, if the works of God are so wonderful, how much more wonderful his own infinite and eternal mind?

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty ! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair : thyself how wondrous then
Unspeakable ! who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

By turning the eye inward, however, on our own mind, we can form some conception of the mind of Divinity, even as a captive child, born and retained in a dark dungeon, may learn something of the sun from the beam that, streaming through a chink of the riven wall, travels the grey lonely floor, or even as, although I had never walked its pebbly shore, nor heard the voice of its thundering breakers, nor played with its swelling waves, I could still form some feeble conception of the ocean from a lake, from a pool, from a drop of water, even from this sparkling dew-drop, which, born from the womb of night, and cradled in the bosom of a flower, lies waiting, like a soul under the Sun of Righteousness, to be exhaled to heaven.

Look at man, then. Is he a poet or a philosopher, a man of mechanical genius or artistic skill, a statesman or a philanthropist, or, better than all, a man who glows with piety ? It matters not. We see that his happiness does not lie in indolence, but in the gratification of his tastes, the indulgence of his feelings, and the active exercise of his faculties. Assume the same to be true of God—the conception, while it exalts, endears our Heavenly Father. Does it not present Him in this most winning and attractive aspect, that the very

happiness of Godhead lies in the forthputting—along with other attributes—of his goodness, love, and mercy? Now, we may be mistaken, and I would not venture to speak dogmatically; yet this does appear to shed a ray, if not a flood of light, on some mysterious passages in the providence of God. Shores on which man has never landed lie paved with shells; fields which his foot has never trod are carpeted with flowers; seas where he has never dived are inlaid with pearls; and caverns into which he has never mined, are radiant with gems of the finest form and the fairest colours. Well, it may be, and has been asked, for what purpose this lavish expenditure of skill and beauty upon scenes, when there is neither an eye of intelligence to admire nor piety to adore the Maker? The poet, lamenting genius unknown, unpatronized, sinking into an ignoble grave, has sung of “flowers that waste their fragrance on the desert air.” And up on the unfrequented shelf of a mountain rock, or rooted in the crevice of an old castle wall, I have found such a flower, opening its modest beauty to the sun, and putting to shame the proudest efforts of human skill. Did you never sit down beside such a flower, and courting its innocent society, ask the question, Fair creature! for what end were you made, and made so very beautiful? It certainly does look a waste of power and skill divine. Yet may it not be, that angels, as they flew by on their missions of mercy, have stayed their wing over that lowly flower, and hovered there awhile, to admire its colours and adore its Maker? But whether or no, God himself is there.

Invisible, He walks these unfrequented solitudes, and with ineffable complacency looks on this little flower as his own mighty work, and a mirror of his infinite perfections. "God," it is said, "shall rejoice in his work." "He made all things for Himself—even the wicked for the day of wrath."

The minnow plays in a shallow pool, and leviathan cleaves the depths of ocean—winged insects sport in a sunbeam, and winged angels sing before the throne; but whether we fix our eye on the one or the other, the whole fabric of creation appears to prove that Jehovah delights in the evolution of his powers, in the display of his wisdom, love, and goodness; and, just as it is to the delight which God enjoys in the exercise of them that we owe this beautiful creation, just so is it to his delight in the exercise of pity, love, and mercy, that we owe salvation, with all its blessings. Let us be both humble and thankful. Man had as little to do with saving as with making himself. The creation of Eden and the cross of Calvary are equally the work of God: and He stands forth before the universe as not by one tittle less the Saviour than the Creator of the world. To display his glory in radiant effulgence—to blaze it out on the eyes of delighted and adoring angels—to evoke the hidden attribute of mercy—to give expression to his grace and pity—Jehovah resolved to save, and, in saving man, to turn this world into a theatre for the most affecting tragedy and amazing love.

Salvation is finished. Salvation is offered—freely offered. Shall it be rejected? Take the good, and

give Him the glory. "He is the God of Salvation;" and "in his name we will set up our banners." In that ladder whereby faith climbs her way aloft to heaven, there is not a round that we can call our own. In this ark which, with open door, offers an asylum in the coming storm—a refuge in the rising flood—from stem to stern and keel to deck there is neither nail, nor plank, nor beam, that we can claim as ours. The plan of redemption was the design of infinite wisdom; its execution was left to redeeming love; and it is Mercy—generous Mercy—whose fair form stands in the open door, inviting, entreating, beseeching you all to come in. Listen to the voice of Jesus—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let his mother teach you how to speak, and learn from angels how to sing. With her—the casket of a divine jewel, holding the babe yet unborn in a virgin womb—with Mary say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name." Or, hark to the angels' song! glowing with seraphic fire, borrow seraphic words; and sing with them, ere they wheel their bright ranks for upward flight, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace and good will to men."

MAN AN OBJECT OF DIVINE MERCY.

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 22.

WE have seen a sere and yellow leaf, tenacious of its hold, hang upon the tree all the winter through; and there it kept dancing and whirling idly in the wind, not beautiful or graceful, out of place and season, in humbling contrast with the young and green companions which budding spring had hung around it. Like that wrinkled and withered thing, some men (who were better in their graves) hang on by this world. They live too long, and die too late—for themselves at least. Half-dead and half-alive, mind failed and memory faded, outliving their usefulness, the melancholy wrecks of what once they were, they tax affection to conceal from strangers' eyes the sad ravages of time, and do for them the tender office of the ivy, when she kindly flings her green and glossy mantle over the crumbling ruin or old hollow tree.

It was the happy fate of Moses—and one most singular at his age—neither to outlive his honour nor his usefulness: the day he laid down his leadership saw him lay down his life. Death found him at his post.

Palinurus was swept from the helm. When Heaven saw meet to take Moses, he was one whom the earth and church would have gladly retained; but the time has arrived when the pilot, who, in calm and storm, through winter and summer seas, has steered the Commonwealth of Israel for well nigh half a century, is to resign the helm to other hands. A faithful God calls a faithful servant to his reward and rest. He did not leave them, however, till these weary voyagers were brought within sight of land, and, indeed, to the mouth of the very haven they had so long desired and looked to see. The children of Israel have arrived at the banks of Jordan. Grateful sight to eyes weary of the desert's naked mountains or its dreary level of barren sand—the people cluster with eager looks on every summit, and, scattered along the banks, gaze across the flood on the Land of Promise. How they feed their eyes, and never weary looking on the verdant pastures, the golden harvests, the rocks clothed with vines, the swelling hills crowned with wood, the plains studded with villages, and cities teeming with a population that told how rich the soil, and how well described the land, as one “full of corn and wine, and flowing with milk and honey.” In this posture of affairs, before he ascends to his rest, Moses summons the tribes; and, like the members of a family who gather from their different and distant homes around a father's deathbed, they come to receive the old man's blessing, his parting counsels, and last, long farewell.

Propped upon pillows, bending on his staff, pausing for breath, speaking in brief and broken sentences, by

those groping hands that felt for Ephraim's and Manasseh's head betraying the stone-blindness of a great old age, Jacob gave his blessing to the twelve sons, who all—uncommon fortune in so large a family—survived their father, and were themselves the ancestors of the living millions, that, swarming out of Egypt, had now reached the banks of Jordan. But how different the bearing and aspect of Moses from that of the hoary patriarch! An old man! if not as old a man, of age not much short of Jacob's, one hundred and twenty years had passed on his head, but they had neither blanched his beard nor thinned his locks, nor drawn a wrinkle on his lofty brow. That eye had lost none of its fire, nor that arm any of its force, since the day when, striking in for a brother's cause, he bestrode the prostrate Hebrew, and, parrying the blow of the Egyptian, gave it back, like a battle-axe, on his head. Nearly the same age as Jacob, whose bent and venerable form, as he entered leaning on Joseph's arm, led Pharaoh to ask, "How old art thou," Moses bore himself erect, and looked the same as on the day, forty years before, when he boldly strode into Pharaoh's hall, and demanded of an angry king that the Hebrews should go free. His sun that went down in the evening of summer's longest day, sunk as full and bright, as if it had set at noon; "his eye was not dim, nor was his natural strength abated," and his life closed amid the rich glories of the noblest address that genius, patriotism, and piety, ever uttered.

Standing on some rocky platform, with his back to

the sky, and his face to the people, Moses delivered an address never forgotten, and that for long ages continued to sound its trumpet echoes in the ears, and to breathe courage into the hearts of Israel. He blessed the tribes in succession, and—charged with inspiration, as a cloud with lightning—he burst forth at the close into these glowing exclamations—“There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help; thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Jordan gleamed in his eye, and stretching out his arms to the land across its flood, he cried—“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; his heaven shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?”—Glorious words to the Hebrew’s ear! and most gracious in Christian eyes. Faith claims them as part of her unalienable heritage, and, looking on that multitude as the dying type of a never-dying church, serves us heirs to the spiritual blessings which lay beneath the veil of these earthly promises.

It is not, however, so much of the close as of the commencement of Moses’ speech, that I would speak. Their deliverer from the house of bondage, and leader of their exodus to the promised land, he was a type of Jesus. That host, supplied with streams from the flinty rock, guided by the Shekinah, and fed with manna from the skies, in its grievous bondage and great deliverance,

its pilgrim wanderings and hard-fought battles, its trials and crowning triumph, was a type of the Church. We are undoubtedly heirs of all its promises; but since we cannot take the sweet and reject the bitter, in serving ourselves heirs to Israel's promises, we become heirs also to her chastisements, her guilt and sin, her warnings and rebukes. Now, listen to Moses as he addressed the very people over whose coming fortunes he threw such glory:—"Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself: Not for thy righteousness or for the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land. Understand, therefore, that thou goest not in for your own sakes. The Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people, and hast been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."

If there be a man on earth, in a situation corresponding to theirs who stood on the brink of the flood and saw Canaan's fields inviting them across, that man is a dying Christian. With life fast ebbing—his battle fought, the journey finished, the desert travelled, the world with its rough paths and illusive vanities behind him, heaven opening its glories to his eye, and death's dark stream rolling at his feet—he stands on the bank of the river, and, ready to pass over when the High Priest has gone down to divide the flood, he waits but the summons to go. Well—I repair to the chamber where this good man dies, and, sitting down beside his bed, I

open the Bible, and read these words in his listening ear, "Thou art to pass Jordan this day. Speak not thou in thine heart, saying, for my own righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess the land. Understand, that the Lord giveth thee not this good land for thy righteousness and uprightness; for thou art stiff-necked, and hast been rebellious against the Lord." To some, who, in their ignorance taking compassion on ours, might turn round to tell us, what a good man, what an example of piety he had been, how bright and steady his light had shone, how much the church would lament his death, and how much the poor would miss his charity, these words would sound hard and harsh, unseasonable and most uncharitable. But whatever harshness might appear to others in such an address, this, sure I am, would be his own humble, prompt, hearty response:—How true! how characteristic! what a faithful picture! how descriptive alike of my original unregenerate state, and the many shortcomings of my renewed nature! Raising his dying eye to heaven, and clasping his hands, he hushes into silence the ill-timed praise of friends, and repeats as his own, the confession of Job,—“I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” In that solemn hour he clings like Peter to the hand of Jesus. Mercy is all his prayer, and mercy all his praise; hopes of mercy in the future light up his eye, while grateful thanks for mercies in the past employ life’s latest breath, and dwell on his faltering tongue. His last conscious look turns away from his

own works to fix itself upon the cross, and the last word that trembles on his quivering lip is, "Jesus."

It were not easy to find a better example of this than one which is recorded in the history of England's greatest apostle. When he lay on an expected deathbed (though God spared him some years longer to the world and church), his attendants asked John Wesley, what were his hopes for eternity? And something like this was his reply—For fifty years, amid scorn and hardship, I have been travelling up and down this world, to preach Jesus Christ: and I have done what in me lay to serve my blessed Master. What he had done, how poor Wesley lived, how hard he laboured, with what holy fire his bosom burned, with what success he preached, how brilliantly he illustrated the character—"dying, and behold we live; unknown, and yet well known; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things;"—these things his life and works attest. They are seen in his church's history, and in the crown he wears in heaven so bright with a blaze of jewels—the saved through his agency. Yet thus he spake, "My hopes for eternity? my only hopes rest on Christ;" and as the confession of his faith, he repeated these glorious words:—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

This confession, so redolent of Wesley's piety, and honourable to his memory, and the words of Moses to Israel, are in perfect harmony. And both are in harmony with this great truth of the text, that God saves

sinner, not for their sakes, or out of any regard whatever to their merits. We have already dwelt at some length on this truth. Why, then, it may be asked, choose the same text, and expatiate again on the same theme? If I needed apology or defence for lingering on this humbling, but most salutary and important subject, I would find it in a high example. Observe how Moses, in his dying address to Israel, repeats and repeats, iterates and reiterates, this very truth—"Speak not thou in thine heart, saying, for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee." Again—"Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land." Again—"Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Again—"Remember, forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord." Again—"In Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you, to have destroyed you." Again—"The Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; let me alone, that I may destroy them." And again—"Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." Thus Moses. A master, who charges his servant with some important

message, repeats and reiterates it. The careful teacher, who communicates some leading rule in grammar to his pupils, or some fundamental truth in science to his students, comes over it again and again ; just as a carpenter, by repeated blows, drives home the nail, and fixes it firm in its place. For the same end we resume our study of the text. It divides itself into two branches ; first, what does not ; secondly, what does move God to save us.

To the first question our answer is—Not anything in us ; to the second—His regard to his own holy name. Now, in speaking on the first of these, I remark—

- I. The doctrine that God is not moved to save man by any merit or worth in him, is a truth of the highest importance and consequence to sinners.

This is no doctrine—like our Lord's personal reign, or the question of adult or infant baptism, or the points of difference between Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents—in regard to which it is not of vital importance which side of the controversy we espouse and advocate. This doctrine has a direct bearing on the salvation of sinners. Like the rough and stern Baptist it prepares the way for Christ. Man must be emptied of self before he can be filled with grace. We must be stripped of our rags, before we can be clothed with righteousness ; we must be unclothed, that we may be clothed upon ; wounded, that we may be healed ; killed, that we may be made alive ; buried in disgrace, that we may rise in

grace. "Sown in corruption, that we may be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, that we may be raised in glory; sown in weakness, that we may be raised in power." These are words as true of the soul as the body. To borrow an illustration from the surgeon's art, the ill-set bone must be broken again, in order that it may be set aright. I press this truth on your attention, because a soul filled with self has no room for God; and, like the inn of Bethlehem, given to lodge meaner guests, a heart full of pride has no chamber, within which Christ may be born "in us the hope of glory."

To tell man that he has no merit is, no doubt, a humbling statement. It lays the loftiest self-sufficient sinner low in the dust. Yes. This doctrine is the true leveller. It puts all men on the same degraded platform before God; sets kings as low as beggars, and the strictest virtue—virtue which the breath of suspicion never sullied—alongside of base and brazen-faced iniquity. I admit that, if we had no better righteousness than our own to rest on, we should do our best to establish its claims, and mayhap assert the right of decency to say to harlots, publicans, and sinners, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou." But why cling to that when we have a better righteousness in our offer? No wonder at all that the mendicant, whose timid knock has called us to the door, stands there shivering in filthy rags. Poor wretch! His crimes or misfortunes have reduced him to this pitiful condition. He has no change of raiment nor choice of clothing; and so,—with none

kind or rich enough to help him,—he must make the best of what he has to cover his naked and emaciated frame from the biting cold. No wonder also, that the prodigal, having wasted his portion in riotous living, in such dress—if dress it could be called—sought his father's house; nor any great wonder that his father, so soon as the quick eyes of love espied him from afar, ran to meet the penitent, fell on his neck, and passionately kissed him in that ragged and loathsome attire. To say nothing of those who have yearned over some unworthy child—every father understands *that*. But how had the wonder of the story grown, how had son, and servants, and neighbours concluded that the wretched youth had drunk away his senses as well as money, had he so loved his rags, as to decline to part with them, and clinging to these wrecks of better days—these sad memorials of his sin and folly—had he refused to put the foul rags off, that he might put the fair robe on! He did nothing so foolish. Why should we?

God pronounces our righteousnesses—observe, not our wickednesses, but our devotions, our charities, our costliest sacrifices, our most applauded services—to be “filthy rags.” Trust not therefore to them. What man in his senses would think of going to court—to wait upon a king in rags? Nor think that the righteousness of the cross was wrought to patch up these; to supplement, as some say, what is either defective or altogether wanting in our personal merits. Nor fancy, like some who would have a Saviour and yet keep their sins, that you may wear these rags beneath his righteous-

ness. Away with them; not as a dress, which a man lays aside, to be afterwards resumed; but cast them away, like a beggar who, having got a better attire, flings his rags into the nearest ditch, and leaves them there in their foulness to rottenness and decay. God says of the sinner whom Faith has conducted to Jesus—“Take away the filthy garments from him, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”

If this doctrine is humbling to human pride, it is full of encouragement to a penitent's hope. It lays me low in the dust, but it is to lift me up. It throws me on the ground, that, like Antaeus, the giant of fable, I may rise stronger than I fell. Since it is not for our sakes that we are saved, since mercy stoops to the lowest guilt, oh then there is hope for me—for a man who has nothing that he can call his own but misery and sin. I will not sit here to perish; but, following a Manasseh and a Magdalene, the dying thief, and a blood-stained Saul, I will join the throng that, called from highways and hedges, are pouring—a ragged crowd—into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Are any among you holding back, until, by this or that improvement in your habits, you esteem yourselves fit to go to Christ? Fit to go to Christ!—fit to go to Christ, you shall never be, but only by going to him. Your warrant in a sense, lies in your very wants; your plea for mercy in his merits; your plea for an interest in his merits in your own demerit. Hear and adopt the prayer of David—“For thine own name's sake, pardon mine iniquity.”

That is his prayer ; now what is his plea ? That his iniquity is little, very little, or less than that of others ? No. This he adds, this he urges, “for it is great.”

Was there ever an invalid so senseless as to say, when I am somewhat better, when this fever burns less fierce, this pulse beats more calm, this running ulcer has a less loathsome and offensive discharge, I will repair to the hospital ? Yet such is their folly who say, when I am holier, I will go to Jesus. Go to him as you are ; shew the physician thy grievous wounds, thy bruises, thy putrifying sores—how the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. It is said of the disciples, that “they took in our Lord as he was into the boat ;” now he is to take you in as you *are*—just as you are. You can be made holy, but not till you repair to him. And what hinders you to go, and go now ? What does he say ? Hear him—“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Is your case bad—very bad ? The worse your case is, the higher, in a sense, your assurance of immediate salvation—yours the hope of the maimed and bleeding soldier whom kind comrades bear from the deadly trench, and who knows that the worse his wound, the more confidently he can reckon on the surgeon’s earliest care ; and that from the very couch, where noblest birth or highest rank lies stretched under some less serious injury, that man of humanity—image of the great Physician—will turn to kneel down by a poor orphan boy, the meanest private—aye, even a mutilated enemy, to tie the severed vessel, and stem the tide that pours his life’s blood upon the ground. God

help you to say with Paul—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," and believing that, to cry with David, "Make haste unto me, O God. O Lord make no tarrying."

II. It is as important for the saint as for the sinner to remember, that he is not saved through personal merit, or for his own sake.

When age has stiffened its bark and fibres, if you bend a branch in a new direction, either turn that to the right hand which had grown to the left, or raise a bough to the skies which had pointed to the ground, it is long before it loses the tendency to resume its old position. Even so, when God has laid his gracious hand upon us, and given this earthly soul a heavenward bent, how prone it is to start back again! For many years after its course has been changed, and the art, that conquers nature, has turned its waters into a new cut, the river needs careful watching; else, when swollen by winter snows or summer flood, it bursts our barriers, sweeps dyke and bulwark to the sea, and, in the pride of victory, foams, and roars, and rages, in its old accustomed channel. And when He that sitteth upon the flood, and turneth the hearts of men like the rivers of water, hath sent the current of our tastes and feelings in a new direction, ah! how apt are they, especially in some outburst of sudden temptation that comes down like a thunder-spout, to flow back into the old and deep-worn

channels of a corrupt nature ! Of this, David and Peter are memorable and dreadful examples. And who, that has attempted to keep his heart with diligence, has not felt, and mourned over the tendency to be working out a righteousness of his own, to be pleased with himself, and, by taking some satisfaction in his own merits, to undervalue those of Christ. So was it with that godly man who, on one occasion—most rare achievement !—offered up a prayer without a wandering thought ; and described it as the worst which he had ever offered, because, as he said, the Devil made him proud of it. So was it also with the minister, who, upon being told by one—more ready to praise the preacher than profit by the sermon—that he had delivered an excellent discourse, replied, “ You need not tell me that ; Satan told me so before I left the pulpit.” Ah ! it were well for the best of us that we could say with Paul, “ We are not ignorant of his devices.”

Step into this room, where the greatest Scotchman lies a dying, and see an example more striking, warning, alarming still. From the iron grasp of kings and princes, Knox has wrung the rights of Scotland. Ready to contend even unto the death, he had bearded proud nobles and prouder churchmen ; he had stood under the fire of battle ; he had been chained to the galley’s oar ; he had occupied the pulpit with a carabine levelled at his fearless head ; to plant God’s truth, and that tree of civil and religious liberty which has struck its roots deep into our soil, and under whose shadow we are this day sitting, he had fought many a hard-fought battle ; but

his hardest of all was fought in the solitude of the night and amid the quietness of a dying chamber. One morning his friends enter his apartment. They find him faint, pallid, wearing the look of one who has passed a troubled night. So he had : he had been fighting, not sleeping ; wrestling, not resting ; and it required all God's grace to bring him off a conqueror. Till day-break, Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant ; but that long night Knox had passed wrestling with the Prince of Darkness. Like Bunyan's pilgrim, he had encountered Apollyon in the valley, and their swords struck fire in the shadow of death. The lion is said to be boldest in the storm. His roar never sounds so loud as in the pauses of the thunder, and when the lightning flashes, brightest are the flashes of his cruel eye. Even so he, who, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour, often seizes the hour of nature's greatest distress to assault us with his fiercest temptations. Satan tempted Job when he was bowed down with grief. Satan tempted Jesus when he was faint with hunger. Satan tempted Peter when he was weary with watching and heart-broken with sorrow ; and, one who shall reserve perhaps his grand assault on us for scenes and seasons that offer him a great advantage, it was when Knox was worn out, and left alone, his head laid low on a dying pillow, that Satan, like a roaring lion, leapt upon his bed. Into that room the Enemy had come. He stands by his side. He reminds him that he had been a standard-bearer of the truth,—a reformer—the most thorough of all the Reformers ; a

bold confessor ; a distinguished sufferer ; the very foremost man of his time and country ; he attempts to persuade him, that surely such rare merits deserve the crown. The Christian conquered—but hard put to it—only conquered through him that loved him. His shield was the truth of my text. He had been lost, wrecked at the mouth of the very harbour, had he lost sight of this beacon—"I do not this for your sake, but for mine holy name's sake."

And seeing that, as these cases shew—like a snake coiled among flowers—there may be such danger lurking under our best attainments ; seeing that, like the inflammatory attacks to which those are most liable who are highest fed, whose bones are most full of marrow, and whose veins are gorged with blood, we may be exposed to spiritual pride through the very fulness of our graces ; seeing that he, who can turn the Bible into arguments for sin, can use our best works as fuel to the fires of vanity, let us watch and pray and learn to be humble. Oh, it is needful for the holiest to remember, that man's best works are bad at the best ; and that, to use the words of Paul, it is "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

III. This doctrine, while it keeps the saint humble, will help to make him holy.

Here—no ornament to park or garden—stands a dwarfed, stunted, bark-bound tree. How am I to deve-

lope that stem into tall and graceful beauty—to clothe with blossoms these naked branches, and hang them, till they bend, with clustered fruit? Change such as that is not to be effected by surface dressing, or any care bestowed on the upper soil. The remedy must go to the root. You cannot make that tree grow upwards till you break the crust below—pulverize the hard subsoil, and give the roots room and way to strike deeper down;—for, the deeper the root, and the wider spread the fine filaments of its rootlets, the higher the tree lifts an umbrageous head to heaven, and throws out its hundred arms to catch, in dews, raindrops, and sunbeams, the blessings of the sky. The believer—in respect of character, “a tree of righteousness of the Lord’s planting,” in respect of strength, “a cedar of Lebanon,” in respect of fruitfulness, an olive, in respect of position, “a palm tree planted in the courts of God’s house,” in respect of full supplies of grace, a tree by the rivers of water “which yieldeth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf doth not wither”—offers this analogy between grace and nature. As the tree grows best skyward that grows most downward, the lower the saint grows in humility the higher he grows in holiness. The soaring corresponds to the sinking.

I wish you to think little, very little of yourselves; but why? because the less you think of yourselves, the more will you esteem Christ; and the humbler you are in your own eyes, the higher you will stand in God’s. The guest, who, coming modestly in, takes the lowest place at the table, is called up to the seat of honour;

and I have always thought, that none are so sure to lie in Jesus' bosom as those I have seen lying the lowest at his feet. Was it not on a woman, who, content to be spoken of as "a dog," held herself well served with crumbs, and asked nothing but the sweepings of the table, that Jesus bestowed a most signal honour. "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." How important, therefore, the sentiment of my text! Receive it; for "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

Piety and pride are not less opposed to each other than light and darkness. No doubt strange and incongruous conjunctions are seen in grace as well as in nature. Like an ill-assorted marriage, you may find a sour look and ascetic temper allied to genuine faith. Eminent piety has stood blushing in sackcloth on a pillory of shame. The sun of saintship has undergone a dreadful and unlooked for eclipse. Good and great men have fallen into gross sin—causing God's people to hang down their heads, and cry, as they wept in secret, "How are the mighty fallen!" In short, the grace of God has been found in such strange company as to give occasion for the remark, "The grace of God will live where neither you nor I could live. But, among these anomalies, passing sometimes almost into monstrosities, I will venture to say you never saw—no, nor the church, nor world, nor any eye nor any age ever yet saw—a saint distinguished for his holiness, who was not also remarkable for his humility. The grandest

edifices, the tallest towers, the loftiest spires, rest on deep foundations. The very safety of eminent gifts and pre-eminent graces lies in their association with deep humility. They were dangerous without it. Great men do need to be good men. Look at this mighty ship—a leviathan on the deep; with her towering masts, and carrying a cloud of canvas, how she steadies herself on the waves, and walks erect upon the rolling waters, like a thing of inherent, self-regulating life! Why—when corn is waving, and trees are bending, and foaming billows roll before the blast and break in thunders on the beach, is she not flung on her beam-ends—sent down—foundering into the deep? Why, because, unseen beneath the surface, a vast well-ballasted hull gives her balance, and, taking hold of the water, keeps her steady under a press of sail, and on the bosom of the swelling sea. Even so, to preserve the saint upright, erect, and safe from falling, God gives him balance and ballast—giving the man on whom he has bestowed lofty endowments, the grace of a proportionate humility.

We have wondered at the lowliness of one, who stood among his compeers like Saul among the people—to find him simple, gentle, generous, docile, humble as a little child—till we found that it was with great men as with great trees. What giant tree has not giant roots? When the tempest has blown over some monarch of the forest, and he lies in death stretched out at his full length upon the ground, on seeing the mighty roots that fed him—the strong cables that moored him to the soil—we cease to wonder at his noble stem, and the broad,

leafy, lofty head he raised to heaven, defiant of storms. Even so, when death has struck down some distinguished saint—whose removal, like that of a great tree, leaves a vast gap below, and whom, brought down now, as it were, to our own level, we can measure better when he has fallen than when he stood—and when the funeral is over, and his repositories are opened, and the secrets of his heart are unlocked and brought to light, ah! now, in the profound humility they reveal—in the spectacle of that honoured grey head, laid so low in the dust before God—we see the great roots and strength of his lofty piety.

Would you be holy? learn to be humble. Would you be humble? take my text, and, with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, engrave it upon your heart; or rather pray—Holy Spirit, fountain of light and giver of all grace, with thine own finger inscribe it there!

Would you be holy? you must be humble. Would you be humble? Oh then! never forget that the magnet, which drew a Saviour from the skies, was not your merit, but your misery. “Be clothed with humility,” and ere long you shall exchange the sackcloth for a shining robe. What! although this grace may impart to your feelings a sombre hue? Grey mornings are the precursors of brightest days; weeping springs are followed by sunny summers and autumns of richest harvest; and in the spiritual as in the natural kingdom—“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

GOD GLORIFIED IN REDEMPTION.

And I will sanctify my great name which was profaned among the heathen, &c.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 23, 24.

THE character of a government may be read in the condition of its subjects. Are they turbulent—in their habits lawless, in their religion superstitious? With coasts full of harbours, and mountains rich in minerals, with a genial climate and a productive soil, are they clothed in rags, housed in cabins, steeped to the lips in poverty? These are the certain signs of bad government. Fields overrun with weeds—fences falling into ruins—the plough rotting in the flooded furrow—and hungry cattle bellowing on scanty pastures—these are the sure signs of bad husbandry. And yonder ragged family, who at school hours roam our streets—the unwashed face and tangled hair bespeaking no mother's kindness—hunger in the hollow eye, and pale emaciated features—these are the sure and too common signs of an unhappy parentage. They suggest the picture of a lodging at the top of some filthy stair, or in some dingy den of a cellar, where a miserable father, the neglected victim of disease and poverty, lies stretched upon the floor, or—as is still more likely—

where a brutal drunkard lives, the tyrant of his children, and the terror of his wife. Thus we judge of a sovereign by his subjects, and thus we see the husbandman in his farm, and the father in his family.

It may be—it were indeed unfair—to apply this rule to our Faith and its Founder. Yet men have done so, and will do so; and thus the cause of God and religion is made to suffer grievous injury at the hand of its nominal friends. By their coldness, their worldliness, their selfishness, their open sinfulness, the little apparent difference between them and those who make no profession at all—nay, sometimes, by their glaring inferiority to the latter in the blow and fruit of the natural virtues, professing Christians—like venders of a bad coinage, have exposed genuine piety to suspicion, and inflicted its deepest wounds on the cause of Christ. Seeing how, in natural graces—kindness of heart—sweetness of temper—generosity—the common charities of life—mere men of the world lose nothing by comparison with such professors, how are you to keep the world from saying, “Ah! your man of religion is no better than others; nay, he is sometimes worse?” With what frightful prominence does this stand out in the answer—never to be forgotten answer—of an Indian chief to the missionary who urged him to be a Christian. The plumed and painted savage drew himself up in the consciousness of superior rectitude, and, with indignation quivering on his lip and flashing in his eagle eye, replied, “Christian lie! Christian cheat! Christian steal!—drink!—murder! Christian has robbed me of my lands and slain my tribe!” adding as he

turned haughtily on his heel, "the Devil, Christian! I will be no Christian." Let such reflections teach us to be careful how we make a religious profession. Having made the profession—cost what it may cost—by the grace of God let us live up to it, and act it out. "It is better not to vow, than, having vowed, not to pay."

These remarks are suggested by the fact already adverted to in the previous discourses—that the interests of divine truth and the name of God suffered in Babylon, in consequence both of the miserable outward condition and more miserable moral condition of the people of Israel. Reduced to bondage, sunk lower still—for, compared to a sinner, how free is a slave!—they exceeded their masters in crime, plunging into greater excess of riot. The heathen—who overlooked the sins of which their misery was the righteous punishment—naturally enough concluded, that the God of a people so wretched and so worthless, must be a weak—perchance a wicked one. Thus his name was profaned, and Jehovah himself dishonoured, till the time arrived, when, arising to plead the cause that was his own, He sanctified his great name in the fortunes of his people, and in the sight of the heathen.

Passing over the special application of these words to the Jews, and looking at them in their prophetic connection with the scheme of redemption, I now remark—

I. That God might have vindicated his honour and sanctified his name in our destruction.

He sanctified his name in the emancipation of his

ancient people. When by one blow He struck the fetters from a nation's limbs, baptized them with his Spirit, gave them favour in the sight of kings, and brought back these weary exiles to Jerusalem, with songs and gladness, then God was sanctified in the midst of all the heathen. His power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness, were beautifully illustrated in the renewed character, joyous homes, and happy fortunes of his people. Now, God might undoubtedly have sanctified himself in them otherwise—vindicating his character in such destruction upon Zion, as he here threatens upon Sidon—"Behold I am against thee, O Sidon, and I will be glorified in the midst of thee, and they shall know that I am the Lord when I shall have executed judgment in her, and shall be sanctified in her; I will send with her pestilence and blood into her streets; and they shall know that I am the Lord."

Two methods of glorifying his name are open to God. He is free to choose either; but by the one or the other way he will exact his full tale of glory from every man. In Egypt, for instance, He was glorified in the high-handed destruction of his enemies; and, in the same land, by the high-handed salvation of his people. In the one case He proved how strong his arm was to smite, and in the other how strong it was to save. Ere he was done with him, he gave Egypt's king a terrible answer to the insolent question, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" God was sanctified before Pharaoh, when, hurrying to the banks of the Nile, and turning pale at the sight, he saw them filled with blood—blood

brimming in every goblet, and blood flowing in every channel. God was again sanctified before Pharaoh, when he saw the same skies rain ice and fire. God was again sanctified before Pharaoh, when, startled at midnight by a nation's wail, and summoned to the bed of his heir and eldest born, he saw him stiff and dead—smitten by the angel of death. And God was again sanctified before Pharaoh, when—as he looked along the watery vista—he saw Moses come down in the grey of morning to the beach, and watching the last Hebrew safe on shore, stretch his rod out upon the deep, whose waves, roaring on their prey, now rush from either flank on the power of Egypt, and bury pale rider and snorting horse—all that bannered army—in their whirling waters. The sea refused God's enemies a grave. She flung them out in contempt upon her shore. Moses stands over the body of the king; and as he gazes on that glassy eye, which had lost its haughtiness, and on those lips, whose insolence the waters had washed away, how might he stoop down, and say, Now you know who is the Lord! Oh! had the seal of death been broken—removed from these blue discoloured lips—theirs had been this solemn utterance, “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; woe to the man that striveth with his maker.”

In like manner, God sanctified his name on the plains of Sodom. He sanctified it, on the one hand, in the destruction of his enemies, and on the other in the salvation of Lot. Ah! then the world ceased to doubt His character, and perhaps angels ceased to wonder that such wickedness was allowed on earth. The light of the city's

conflagration illuminated His holiness, and His throne rose up in dread and awful majesty amid the smoking ruins. And how was He sanctified in that wretched fugitive, who has crossed but half the plain! a wife, she comes not to a husband's calls—a mother, she stirs not to her children's piercing cry. Look at that white and spectral form with head turned on the burning ruins—a woman stiffened into stone, with her cold grey eyes staring large on Sodom, and the surprise—horror—that had seized her soul, as she felt her warm flesh hardening into stone, carved on these rigid features. “Remember Lot's wife.” She stands there an example of God's power to sanctify his name, and an awful lesson to the end of time. Deep on the statue's stony brow these words are engraven—“No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Since there are two ways open to God, by either of which he may sanctify his great name, he might therefore, at the fall, have vindicated his justice by swift and unsparing vengeance—by destroying the whole human family. He did so, in the case of fallen angels. Of these, there was no wreck or remnant saved. Not one escaped. No ark floated on the waters, to which—like Noah's dove—a flying angel pursued by wrath might turn his weary wing. Can it be doubted, that the measure meted out to fallen angels, God might have meted out to fallen men?—sanctifying His great name in our ruin rather than in our redemption. Now, before I shew how he sanctifies himself in the redemption of

his people, let me warn you, that what God might have done with all, he shall do with some—with all who despise, reject, or even neglect salvation. “How shall ye escape if ye neglect this great salvation?” Yes; the trees shall burn that will not bear. Be assured that God loses nothing in the end. He will make his own use of every man, extracting glory out of all—even from cumberers of the ground. If you are not good for fruit, you shall serve for fuel. God indeed is not willing that any should perish; willing, most willing, rather that the sinner should live, he follows him to the precincts of perdition, to the gate of hell, crying, “turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” Yet be warned in time; you cannot escape the alternative; this or that you must choose—to honour God by your active or your passive obedience. God help you, like Mary, to choose the better part! This day I set before you “life and death.” Will you do His will in heaven, or suffer it in hell? How terrible these words! “God hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of wrath.”

II. God sanctifies his name, and glorifies himself in our redemption.

It is easy to destroy—to inflict irreparable injury on character, virtue, life, anything. Falling with murderous strokes on yonder noble tree, the woodman’s axe demolishes in a few hours what it has required centuries to raise. Look at that beautiful gourd, under whose green and grateful shade the prophet sits!

Emblem of all happiness that has its root in earth, it falls by the feeblest of means—a worm's teeth; the poisonous east wind breathes on its leaves, the hot sun glares on them, and they wither away. An ounce of lead, one inch of steel, a drop distilled from a serpent's fang, even a grain of sand lodged in the passages of life—any one of these is fatal. How quickly they turn our living, delicate, wondrous frame into a heap of undistinguishable dust—a handful of cold black ashes! In the body man destroys what God only can make, and in this more precious and immortal soul, Satan destroys what God only can save. It needs but a devil to ruin the spirit, it needs Divinity to redeem it. It needs but a villain to steal virtue, it needs a divine power to restore the stolen jewel. How much easier is it to kill a man than cure him? to be an executioner than a physician? To sit robed on the bench of justice, and, assuming her fatal cap, to condemn a poor wretch to die; to draw the bolt and from the drop launch a soul into another world; to stand on the field of battle, and with levelled musket—by a slight motion of the finger—to dash a fellow-creature into eternity—these are easier than to bless with one hour's sleep a bed of pain. It is less difficult to stop this pulse for ever, than bring down its death gallop to the calm and measured march of health. And as, in such cases, man's glory is more illustrated by curing than killing, so God's glory is more pre-eminent in redemption than it had been in our final and everlasting ruin.

Excepting of course the preacher's—for with Paul

we magnify our office—of all earthly employments it appears to me that the physician's is the noblest, and that of all arts the healing art is the highest, offering to genius and benevolence their noblest field. Casting no disparagement on the brave and gallant spirits, who have guarded a country's shores—and some of whom falling in the ranks of battle have offered most illustrious examples of soldiers, true both to an earthly crown and a Saviour's cross—yet we know that the aim of a warrior is ingeniously to invent, and his business effectively to use, instruments of destruction. His greatest achievements are wrought where deadly wounds are suffered; his proudest triumphs are won where flames, kindled by the torch of war, blaze over blood-stained hearths, and, horrible to think of! where fields are fattened with human gore. His laurels are watered with tears; his course, like the hurricane, is marked by destruction; and it is his unhappy lot—perhaps the unhappiest view of arms as a profession—that he cannot conquer foes but at the sacrifice of friends. In the eye of reason, and of a humanity that weeps over a suffering world, his is surely the nobler vocation—and, if not more honoured—the more honourable calling, who sheds blood not to kill, but cure; who wounds, not that the bleeding may die, but live; and whose genius ransacks earth and ocean in search of means to save life, to remove deformity, to repair decay, to invigorate failing powers, and restore the rose of health to pallid cheeks. His aim is not to inflict pain, but relieve it—not to destroy a father, but—boldly standing between him and death—to

save an anxious wife from widowhood, and these little children from an orphan's lot. And if, although they be wove round no coronet, those are fairer and fresher laurels which are won by saving than by slaying; if it is a nobler thing to rescue life than destroy it, even when its destruction is an act of justice; then, on the same principle, God most glorified himself when revealed in the flesh, and speaking by his Son, he descended on a guilty world—his purpose this—"I came not to judge the world, but to save it,"—and this his character—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

Apart, however, from this general consideration, I remark that the scheme of redemption is eminently illustrative of the attributes of Jehovah. For example—

I. His power is glorified in the work of salvation.

The path of redemption is marked, and its pages are crowded with stupendous miracles. At one time God stays the waves of the sea, at another he stops the wheels of the sun, and, now reversing the machinery of heaven to confirm his word, he makes the shadow travel backwards on the dial of Ahaz. Heaven descends to earth, and its inhabitants, mingling with men, walk the stage of redemption. Here one angel speaks out of a burning bush, and there another leaps on a burning altar, and, with wing unscorched, ascends to heaven in its flame. Here a prophet, exempted from the law of death, goes up to glory in a fiery chariot, and there

another within the belly of a whale goes down into the depths of ocean. In contradiction of the laws of nature, a body that should have gravitated to the earth, floats, from the top of Olivet, upward into the ambient air. Across the surface of a lake which frost never bound, and winter never paved with ice, walks a human form, stepping on from billow to billow. The captive of the grave becomes its conqueror, and, laying aside its ceremonies as night-clothes left in bed, he walks forth on the dewy grass at the break of day; the prisoner has bound his jailor and carried off the keys. Over Bethlehem's fields, angels with the light of their wings turn midnight into day, and shepherds, who watch their flocks, are regaled by voices of the skies—the song of heaven over a babe, who has a poor woman for his mother, and a stable for his lowly birth-place. Nor less remarkable, the deaf are listening to the songs of the dumb, and the blind are gazing on the dead alive; a dumb beast takes human speech and rebukes the hoary seer; ravens leave their young to cater in the fields for man; and angels abandon heaven to hold sentinel watch by the grave of one whom his God forsook, his country rejected, his friends repudiated, and none but a thief confessed. And amid these wonders and thousands more, acted before men's eyes on the stage of redemption, and all so illustrative of the presence and power of God, the crowning wonder—the wonder of wonders—is He that works them; the son of a virgin! dust and Divinity! Creator and creature! “the mystery of godliness, God

manifest in the flesh." Truly "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

But to glance at the change wrought in redemption on man himself, what amazing power does it display! What a glorious combination of benevolence and omnipotence! Punishment is confessedly easier than reformation. Nothing is more easy than, by the hand of an executioner, to rid society of a criminal; but to soften his stony heart, to turn his steps from the paths of crime, to wean him from vice, to get him to fall in love with virtue, to make the cunning rogue, the brutal ruffian, an honest, honourable, kind, and tender man—ah! that is another thing. Hence, by men callous of heart, and deaf to the groans of suffering humanity, the preference given to prisons over schools, to punishment over prevention. Well, then, since it is confessedly easier—easier, not better; easier, not in the end cheaper—to punish than reform, I say that God's power is more illustriously displayed in pardoning one guilty—in purifying one polluted man, than if the law had been left to take her sternest course, and our entire family had been buried in the ruins of the fall. We honour justice when she holds the balance even, and before a land that cries for blood, brings out the murderer to hang him up in the face of the sun: "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Yet, like the noble-minded Romans, who decreed a crown to the man that saved a citizen, we would hold him worthy of highest honours who brings a criminal from his cell, so changed as to be worthy, not only of being restored to the bosom

of society, but of holding a place in the senate, or some post of dignity beside the throne. That were an achievement of brilliant renown—a victory over which humanity and piety would shed tears of joy.

To compare small things with great, something like this—but unspeakably nobler and greater—God works in salvation. For example—In John Bunyan, he calls the bold leader of village reprobates to preach the Gospel; a blaspheming tinker to become one of England's famous confessors; and from the gloomy portals of Bedford jail, to shed forth the lustre of his sanctified and resplendent genius to the further limits of the world, and adown the whole course of time. From the deck of a slave ship he summons John Newton to the pulpit; and by hands defiled with Mammon's most nefarious traffic, he brings them that are bound out of darkness, and smites adamantine fetters from the slaves of sin. In Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, he has converted his Son's bitterest enemy into his warmest friend. To the man whom a trembling church held most in dread, she comes to owe, under God, the weightiest obligations. In Paul she has her boldest champion, her greatest logician, the most gallant of her defenders, her grandest preacher, the prince of apostles, the largest contributor to this imperishable volume. How much better for these three stars to be shining in heaven, than quenched in the blackness of darkness. Better for the good of man—better for the glory of God. In them, and in all the sainted throng around them, has not God more illustriously displayed his power, than if he had crushed

them by the thunders of his vengeance, and buried them in the depths of hell? The power of divinity culminates in grace. Oh, that we also may become its monuments, and be built up by the hands of an eternal Spirit, to the glory of the cross! And why not? Look at these men! Think what they were; behold what they are! The thief of the cross bends from his throne in glory and bids you hope. Addressing your prayers to him whose ear is never heavy that it cannot hear, nor his hand shortened that it cannot save, be this your earnest, your urgent cry, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake, as in the ancient days in the generations of old."

THE WISDOM AND HOLINESS OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN SALVATION.

And I will sanctify my great name which ye have profaned—

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 23.

THE effect of the wind is visible—not the element itself. The clouds scud across the sky, the trees swing their arms wildly in the air, aerial waves chase each other across the corn, and the boat, catching the gale in her flowing sheet, goes dancing over the billows. So—although in a sense infinitely higher—the invisible is visible; and in his works we see One, who, seeing all, remains himself unseen. He is lost—not in darkness—but in light; a sun that blinds the eye which is turned on its burning disc. Angels themselves, unable to sustain his glory, cover their faces with their wings, and use them—as a man his hand—to screen their eyes from the ineffable effulgence.

Suppose that we ascend the steps of creation, from matter in its crudest form to nature's highest and most beautiful arrangements; from the lichen that clothes a rock to the oak that stands rooted in its crevices; from the dull coal to the same mineral crystallized in a flashing diamond; from a dewdrop, cradled in the cup of a flower, to the great ocean that lies in

the hollow of its Maker's hand; from a spark that expires in the moment of its birth, to the sun which has risen and set with unabated splendour on the graves of a hundred generations; from the instinct of the moth that flutters round a taper, to the intellect of an angel, who hovers before the throne; from a grain of sand to this vast globe; from this world to a creation in its amplitude perhaps as much greater than our planet as it is greater than the grain of sand: As we climb upwards, step by step, our views of God's glory enlarge. They rise with our elevation, and expand with the widening prospect. At length we reach a pinnacle where the whole heavens and earth lie spread out beneath our feet;—we reach it to fall on our knees, and cry, as we catch the strain of adoring seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory!”

It is not given to man to discover all the works and ways of God. No; with our boasted discoveries and pride of science, perhaps these lie as unknown to us as the wide forest to the microscopic insect, whose life is measured by a day, whose world is a leaf—that narrow territory the scene of its most distant journeys, its country, its cradle, and its grave. With what modesty, then, should the highest intellect bow down and bear itself in presence of the Creator! Let the patriarch, in language worthy of so high a theme, describe his majesty. “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.

He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof; he divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud; by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent; lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" Unbeliever although he was, the great Laplace echoed these sentiments in this, one of his last and not least memorable utterances—"It is the little that we know; it is the great that remains unknown." And in the confession of his ignorance, has not a Christian, and still greater philosopher, left us perhaps the finest illustration of his wisdom? Newton's most brilliant discoveries reflect no brighter lustre on Newton's name than his well-known comparison of himself to a little child—a child who had gathered some few pebbles on the shore of a vast and unexplored ocean.

Although comprehending but little of the ways of God, man, however, is privileged to contemplate, and is in his own person honoured to illustrate, the noblest of them all. He may be a houseless beggar, but, if grace has made him a new creature, there is more of God seen beneath his rags than in the sun itself; nor does that brilliant sky studded thick with stars reveal the fulness of Divinity that shines in the cross of Calvary and the face of Jesus. Bethlehem Ephratah was "little among the cities of Judah." And our world seems little also among the suns and systems of creation—a dark

dim, insignificant spot; yet the eyes of an astonished and admiring universe have been turned on our planet. It has all the importance spiritually, which physically was attributed to it, when men supposed our earth to be the centre of creation.

Here is the place in the great universe from which God and his attributes are beheld in the clearest light, and may be studied to the greatest advantage. It corresponds to that one spot lying right beneath the dome of a noble cathedral—where the spectator, commanding all the grandest features of the edifice, is instructed to look around him, if he would see the monument of its architect. For where is God to be seen as we behold him on the cross and in the Gospel? I scale bartizan or tower to embrace at one view the map of a mighty city. Or I climb the sides of some lofty hill to survey the land that lies in beauty at its feet. And had I the range of the universe, where should I go to obtain the fullest exhibition of the Godhead? Rising on angel-wings, shall I soar to the heights of heaven to look on its happiness, and listen to angel's hymns? Or shall I cleave the darkness, and—sailing round the edge of the fiery gulf—listen to the wail, and weep over the misery of the lost? No; turning alike from these sunny heights and doleful regions, here I would remain; and, travelling on a pilgrimage to Palestine, would stand beneath the dome of heaven with my feet on Calvary. On that consecrated spot, where the cross of salvation rose, and the blood of a Redeemer fell, I find the centre of a spiritual

universe. Here the hosts of heaven descended to acquaint themselves with God in Christ; here in a completed arch, if I may so speak, locked fast by the key, all the properties of divinity meet; here, concentrated as in a burning focus, its varied attributes blend and shine.

We had begun to shew how these attributes were exhibited in the work of redemption; and having illustrated this in the power of God, we now remark that—

II. The wisdom of God is glorified in redemption.

The British Museum possesses in the Portland Vase one of the finest remains of ancient art; and it may be remembered how—some years ago—the world of taste was shocked to hear that this precious relic had been shattered by a maniac hand. Without disparaging classic taste or that exquisite example of it, I will venture to say, that there is not a poor worm which we tread upon, not a sere leaf, that, like a ruined but reckless man, dances merrily in its fallen state to the autumn winds, but has superior claims upon our study and admiration. The child who plucks a rose to pieces, or crushes the fragile form of a fluttering insect, destroys a work which the highest art could not invent, nor man's best skilled hand construct. Nor was there a leaf that quivered on those trees which stood under the domes of the Crystal Palace, but eclipsed the brightest glories of loom or chisel; it found no rival among the triumphs of invention, which a world went there to see. Yes;

in his humblest works, God infinitely surpasses our highest efforts. "Wisdom is justified of her children;" nor shall our God be left without a witness so long as thunders peal and lightnings flash, and breakers beat upon the shore; so long as a flower blooms in the field, a fin cleaves the deep, or a wing cuts the air; so long as glowing suns blaze above, or dying glow-worms shine below. That controversialist gave the Atheist a crushing answer who told him that the very feather with which he penned the words, "There is no God," refuted the audacious lie.

In redemption this wisdom is pre-eminent. That work associates such transcendent wisdom with love, power, and mercy, that the Saviour of man is called "the wisdom of God." The apostle selects the definite article, and pronounces Christ to be "*the* power of God and *the* wisdom of God." Nor can the propriety of the language be doubted by any, who reflect but for a moment on what a hard task wisdom was set—what a difficult problem she was called to solve—when man was to be saved? She had to forge a key that could unlock the grave; she had to build a lifeboat that would swim in a sea of fire; she had to construct a ladder long enough to scale the skies; she was required to invent a plan whereby justice might be fully satisfied, and yet the guilty saved. The highest intelligences had been at fault here. They might well have asked, who is sufficient for these things? "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." In such an emergency—for such a task

—sufficient wisdom dwelt only with the Godhead—in him in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” “How shall man be just with God,” is a mystery insolvable to all but Him in, whom the most extraordinary and apparently conflicting elements have met; who has a double nature in a single person—who has a divine father and human mother, who is the only begotten of God and first born of a virgin womb—who, being in one sense dust, and in another sense divinity, has a nature to satisfy and also a nature to suffer.

Now, this wisdom of God in redemption is in no aspect brought out more strikingly than in the harmony which it has established among what appear conflicting attributes. Here is nothing like the prophet’s graphic picture of a city, where chariots jostle each other on the streets; nor like what happens even on the spacious ocean, when in the gloom of night bark dashes into bark, and foundering crews find in their ship a coffin, and in the deep sea their grave. Harmony, indeed, sits enthroned amid the beautiful order of the starry heavens. Flaming sun, and wandering comet, and rolling planets, move in their orbits without accident or collision; yet in the harmony established among the attributes of God, redemption illustrates a higher wisdom. We appeal to one fact, which brings that out most palpably. It is this, that with the deepest interests at stake—in circumstances eminently fitted to sharpen his ingenuity—man never approached, so much as guessed at, the only method of salvation. We can shew how near preceding philosophers have reached to the later

discoveries of science. For many centuries before their practical application, China was familiar with the properties both of gunpowder and the magnet; and in our own day have not we seen one astronomer get upon the track of a star, and start a thought, by which another—who pursued it to its ultimate conclusions—has been conducted to the brilliant discovery? Every one acquainted with the history of science, knows that some of the greatest inventions of the nineteenth century were all but anticipated at former periods; another step—but another step—and the world had possessed them ages before; and, centuries ago, man would have steered his way across the sea by the compass needle, yoked the spirits of fire and water to his triumphant wheels, and flashed his messages over oceans and continents on the wings of lightning.

The mystery of godliness, however—God manifest in the flesh—a “Daysman” such as the patriarch desired—with the right hand of Divinity to lay on God, and the left hand of humanity to lay on man, and thus the “fellow” and friend of both, to reconcile the estranged—in short, a man to suffer and a God to satisfy, this was a thought which it never entered the boldest mind to conceive. We find nothing corresponding to this in the creeds and religions of a heathen world. There is neither glimpse nor glimmering of it in these. Every way but the right one was thought of. Here, the sinner seeks by his own works to work out redemption; here, by costly sacrifices he attempts to appease offended justice; here, in children—whom he offers on the bloody

altar, or passes through the fire to Moloch—he gives the “fruit of his body for the sin of his soul;” here again—doing less violence to nature—guilty of a crime less contrary to reason and revolting to humanity, he courts death beneath the ponderous wheels of Juggernaut, and sheds the blood of his own body to expiate the guilt of his soul. These were the sands on which man built his house. These were the straws the drowning caught at. There never entered into other mind than God’s a plan, or shadow of a plan, by which gentle Mercy might be espoused to stern Justice, and God—in the lustre of untarnished holiness, and the majesty of a vindicated law—might appear, as he is seen in Jesus, the “just and yet the justifier of the ungodly.”

III. The holiness of God is glorified in redemption.

The eyes are moved by the heart, as the hands of a time-piece are turned by its internal machinery. We turn them *to* what the heart loves, and *from* what the heart loathes. The most emphatic expression of dislike is a silent one—the closed eyes and averted head. Such an attitude as I can fancy Zedekiah’s was, when they brought out his sons to slay them in their father’s presence; and “to wound him that God had smitten,” to add bitterness to his captivity and a crushing weight to his chains, to imprint a spectacle on his memory, that should haunt him like a horrid spectre, when sight was quenched and hope for ever gone, his barbarous enemies put the children to death before they put out the father’s

eyes. When you have in fancy put yourself in that father's place, imagining, when you had implored them to begin with you, and save you this horrid sight, and they had refused the favour of these burning irons, how you would have closed your eyes, and turned shuddering from the scene, you may be able in some measure to appreciate the abhorrence with which a holy God regards iniquity. Hear the prophet—"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and *canst not look* on iniquity."

Nothing might appear more strongly to express the holiness of God than this language, "Thou canst not look on iniquity;" and yet his hatred of sin is still more fully and much more strongly expressed by the very way in which he saves the sinner; more fully expressed in redemption, than if, executing relentless vengeance, with an eye that knew no pity, and with a hand that would not spare, he had made an utter end of sinners—such an end that, to borrow the language of the prophet, "there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." What man, what father, has not felt so on reading even the story of the Roman judge? Had that sternest of patriots condemned common criminals enough to make the scaffolds of justice and the gutters of Rome run red with blood, such wholesale slaughter had been a weak expression of his abhorrence of crime, compared with the death of this solitary youth. When the culprit—his own child, the infant he had carried in his arms, his once sweet and beautiful boy, the child of his tenderest affections, who had wound himself round a father's heart—rose and received the immolating sen-

tence at a father's lips, oh ! that iron man offered the costliest sacrifice man ever made at the shrine of justice, and earned for Roman virtue a proverbial fame.

That is nothing to the spectacle which redemption offers. Over what are these angels hovering ? On what scene do they bend a gaze so fixed, intent, so full of awe and wonder ? Sons of the morning ! they had sung in their joy over a new-born world. Attendants at the birth of earth ! they now hail with intenser wonder, and praise in loftier strains, the birth in a stable, the appearance of a babe in Bethlehem. They had seen suns blazing into light ; they had seen worlds start into being, and watched them as, receiving their first impulse from the Creator's hand, they rolled away into the far realm of space ; but never had they followed world or sun with such interest as they follow the steps of this weary Traveller from his lowly cradle to the cross of Calvary. What draws all eyes to that sacred spot ? what holds them gazing on it with looks of such solemn interest ? The Son of God dies beneath his Father's hand. Innocence bleeds for guilt ; divine innocence for human guilt ; a spectacle at which, perhaps, in the mysterious language of the Apocalypse, " There was silence in heaven." On the night which Daniel passed in the lions' den the Persian would hear no music ;—nor flute, nor harp, nor psaltery, nor dulcimer, woke the echoes of his palace ; the daughters of music were all brought low. And I could be bold enough to fancy that during these dread hours, when God's Son hung dying on the tree, there was no music in heaven—there was a solemn pause ;

still every harp, silent and hushed the voice of song ; then, when all is over, and the cry, “ It is finished,” and the last dying quiver have passed from Jesus’ lips, I can fancy how these angels broke the awful silence, and, turning round to the throne, exclaimed, with new, with deeper, with holier reverence, “ Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”

This holiness, so glorified in redemption, appears still more plainly, when we consider how the eyes of Love both multiply and magnify beauties ; and, overlooking all defects, reconcile us even to deformity. How beautifully, tenderly, touchingly, affection clings to an idiot child ! with what ingenuity does Love palliate in our children faults which are tolerable and tolerated in no one else. She flings a broad and kindly mantle over the shame of child and parent, brother, sister, and friend. See how Eli—a too indulgent parent—tolerates crimes in his sons, which it is only doing this holy man justice to believe, he would have died rather than have himself committed. Now, in our judgment, the holiness of God shines conspicuously in this, that, even when sin was mysteriously associated with his beloved Son, it appeared none the less vile in his eyes ; perhaps viler, fouler, still more loathsome,—just as the churchyard mould, flung by the sexton from a grave upon winter’s fresh fallen snow, looks the blacker for the contrast. Love would have spared the pains of a beloved Son, but see how it is met and mastered by God’s hatred of sin. He looks on our sins as laid on Christ, and still he hates them with a perfect hatred, turning on our

generous substitute an unmitigated vengeance. To slay sin, he passes his sword through the bosom of a well-beloved Son. If he spared not even his own Son, when he took our sins upon him, how holy is God! Whom will he spare? What will he spare? How loud the alarm that Calvary rings in the ears of a drowsy world! With your eye turned to the cross, within sight of its agonies, within sound of its groans, I ask the question, and wait for an answer, If he did not spare his own Son, how shall he spare the impenitent and unbelieving? "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

IV. The justice of God is glorified in redemption.

The prophet is perplexed. He strains his eye to penetrate a mystery. He says to God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil;" but then, as one unable to reconcile the attributes of his character with the dealings of his providence, he asks, "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" Now, although—as that question implies—clouds and darkness are round about Jehovah's throne, whatever shadow present events may appear to cast upon his justice, and to whatever trial, as in the wrongs of a Joseph or David, faith may be put, in believing that there is a just God upon earth, his justice is as conspicuous in redemption as was the cross which illustrated it to the crowd on Calvary. Sinners,

indeed, are pardoned, but then, their sins are punished ; the guilty are acquitted, but then, their guilt is condemned ; the sinner lives, but then, the surety dies ; the debtor is discharged, but not till the debt is paid. Dying “ the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” Jesus satisfies for us ; and as we have seen a paid and discharged account pierced by a nail, and hung to gather cobwebs on the dusty wall, the surety who paid our debt, nor left us one farthing to pay, has taken the handwriting that was against us and nailed it to his cross.

And now, I aver, that justice is not only satisfied, but more than satisfied. She is better pleased to have her debtors free in heaven than incarcerated in hell. It must be so. It is better for the creditor to hold the money in his purse than him who owed it in a prison, and there is no man of common humanity or even of common sense, but esteems himself happier to have the debt paid than the debtor rotting in a jail. Observe, I pray you, that in regard to the lost, and her claims on them, justice, in a sense, is never satisfied. The pains of hell do not, and cannot exhaust the penalty. Dreadful sentence ! banishment for life, for life eternal, from the blissful presence of God. Mysterious debt ! which ever paying is never paid. No wonder, in one sense, that Jesus died to save. The calamity is so tremendous, so incalculably tremendous, that the occasion was as worthy of the interposition of God, as the salvation it offers is of your grateful and instant acceptance. Embrace it ; for no length of suffering discharges this

debt—an awful truth clearly established by the awful fact that the debtor is never discharged. Justice, in the way of punishment, is never satisfied; and it is plain therefore—to say nothing of his mercy—that God's justice is more illustriously glorified, and far more fully satisfied through the satisfaction rendered by our substitute, than it could have been by our everlasting sufferings.

Nor is that all. It is a vulgar error to suppose that the only office of justice is to punish. Justice has higher and more pleasing functions. Sternly, indeed, she stands by the gallows tree; and when her hand has drawn the bolt and launched her victim into eternity, she leaves the scene, sorrowing, it may be, yet satisfied. It is a melancholy satisfaction. From that revolting spectacle turn to this hall of assembled nobles, where amid the brilliant, flashing, gorgeous, magnificence of the scene, all eyes are fixed upon one man. He comes red with the blood of a hundred battles, and crowned with the trophies of a hundred victories; he comes at the summons of a sovereign whose crown he has saved; he comes to receive the thanks of a country, grateful for his defence of its shores. Justice presides in that assembly. She was satisfied on the scaffold, here she is more than satisfied. Pleasure and triumph light up her eye, as, with lavish hand, she dispenses titles and rewards, and upon a head so often covered by the God of battles, she places a laurel crown.

In fact, it is her noblest function to reward merit, to wreath with honours the brow of virtue or of valour,

and send suspected innocence back to the world cheered by the plaudits and flushed with the triumph of a public acquittal. Justice did a stern but righteous act, when she hung up Haman in the face of the sun, and before the eyes of the city—a warning to all tyrants, and a terror to all sycophants; yet it was a loftier and a happier exercise of her functions to call the Jew from obscurity, to conduct him along the crowded streets with a crest-fallen enemy walking at his stirrup, and royal heralds going before to blow his fame, and ever and anon to cry, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.” Even so, shall the justice of God be glorified when heads, now lying in the grave, are crowned with honour. Believer! lift up thy drooping head. Thou shalt lift it up in glory from the dust. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” In consideration of a Redeemer’s righteousness, God shall crown thy brows; in the righteousness that is on thee, he will reward the work of his Son; and in the righteousness that is in thee, approve the work of his Spirit. The august assembly of the skies shall present a spectacle of justice glorified. In the Head with all the members exalted, the Captain and every soldier of his army crowned, Jesus shall receive the full payment of His wages, and justice shall reward a Saviour in the saved. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”

THE MERCY OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN SALVATION.

And I will sanctify my great name, which ye have profaned.—

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 23.

GRADUAL development appears to be the law of nature, or, to speak more correctly, the method of the divine government. The day does not rush into light, nor blaze upon a dazzled world with the flash of an explosion; but the sky brightens overhead, and the various features of the landscape grow more and more distinct, as the first streaks of morning are developing into a perfect day. Nature never moves abruptly—by starts and sudden impulses;—the day bursts not into light, nor the woodland into song, nor the buds into leaf, nor the flowers into full blown beauty. From her grave she comes forth at the voice of spring, but not all of a sudden, like the sepulchred Lazarus, at the call of Jesus. The seasons advance with a steady march—by gradual and graceful steps. From the first notes that break the long winter silence, till groves are ringing with love songs; from the first bud which looks out on departing storms, till woods are robed in their varied foliage; from the first flower—sweet and welcome harbinger of spring—that

hangs its white bell beside the lingering snow, till gardens and meadows bloom, and earth offers incense to her God from a thousand censers; from summer's first ripe fruit, till autumn sheaves fall to the reaper's song, and fields are bare, and barnyards are full, and every farm keeps "harvest home"—all is progressive.

Man himself presents no exception to this law. The cradle is shorter than the coffin; infancy outgrows its dress; the stammering tongue waxes eloquent; the tottering foot follows the chase, or stands balanced on the rocking mast; and those feeble arms which now clasp a mother's neck, shall ere long battle with difficulties, subdue the rugged soil, or lay groaning forests low.

Our minds also grow with our bodies. They expand like a flower-bud; memory, fancy, reason, reflection, lie folded up in an infant's soul, just like the leaves of an unblown rose. Bathed by night in dews, and by day in sunbeams, these open out to delight the eye with their colours and perfume the air with their fragrance; so those expand under the genial influences of a mother's culture, and the dawning light of truth.

Universal as that of gravitation, the law that reigns paramount in the worlds of mind and matter, extends into the spiritual kingdom. The God of nature is the God of grace, and as he acts without the church, he acts within it. In the first place, the Gospel system itself was gradually developed. The Bible was once a very little book. It grew by degrees to its present size; and, as in a house, stone is laid on stone, and storey

built upon storey, so book was superadded to book—history to history—prophecy to prophecy—gospel to gospel—and one epistle to another, till the hands of John laid on the copestone, and, standing on the pinnacle of this sacred edifice, he pronounced God's wide and withering curse on all who should impair its integrity. The temple, in which "the Lord of the temple" appeared, took forty years to complete, but the written word was a work of two thousand, and the revealed word of not less than twice two thousand years. It was a long road between Paradise and Patmos; and a protracted dawn from the first streak of morning that rose on the Fall, till the sun introduced the perfect day. A period of at least four thousand years separated the curse of Eden and the cross of Calvary.

In the second place, while the truth was thus slowly developed and admitted by degrees on a benighted world, the effect of that truth on a benighted soul is also gradual. Who starts up into a finished Christian? The very best men come from their graves, like Lazarus, "bound with grave clothes"—not like Jesus, who left the death dress behind him; and, alas! in their remaining corruptions, all carry some of these cerements about with them, nor drop them but at the gate of heaven. The Christian is an example of gradual development. When our growth is quickest, how slow it is! As, from some fresh stain we wash our hands in the blood of Jesus; as, from the field of daily conflict we retire wounded at evening to apply the balm of Gilead; as, with David, we eye some eminence from which we have fallen, or, looking back

along the year, measure the little progress we have made—how often are we constrained to ask in disappointment, “When shall I be holy?” how often are we constrained to cry in prayer, “How long, O Lord, how long?” At times it seems as if the dawn would never brighten into day. We almost fear that our fate shall have its emblem in some unhappy flower, which—withered by frost, or the home of a worm—never blows at all; but dies like an unborn infant, whose coffin is a mother’s womb. Blessed be God! this shall not happen with any child of grace. He will perform all things for his people, and perfect what concerneth them. Still, although he who has begun a good work in them will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus, all the figures of Scripture indicate progress—a gradual progress. The believer is a babe who grows “to the stature of a perfect man in Christ,” and “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

These laws of development have their limit in creation. They affect not God. He has made no progress. There was room for none. His maturity, eternally as well as divinely perfect, knows neither growth nor age. His wisdom, knowledge, goodness, love, justice, truth, and mercy, were always—millions of ages ago—what they are now. Knowing no growth, he can suffer no decay. It is the sun which rises that sets; but it is the peculiar and characteristic attribute of Divinity to be “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” His being is as an infinite ocean, which holds within its

bosom all that lives and is ; that has neither shore nor bottom, beginning nor end, ebb nor flow, calm nor tempest ; which no changes alter, nor tributaries supply ; and which, affected neither by tide nor time, has been, is, and ever shall be full. How adorable is God ! He is great, and greatly to be feared. The attributes of God, however, have been gradually revealed to the knowledge of his intelligent creatures ; their light has risen on the universe like daybreak upon our planet. For example, when he created angels, suns, and worlds, God, in the first instance, displayed his being, his wisdom, his power, his holiness, and his goodness. Then came the first fall. Its scene was laid in heaven. A part of the angelic host committed sin ; and that event called forth the exhibition of another attribute, or—to speak with more propriety—a new display of justice. Punitive justice was now revealed. She unsheathed her glittering sword ; and falling in righteous vengeance on the workers of iniquity, it sheared their glory from angels' heads.

Time rolled on ; how long we know not. At length our world was created, and, after passing through many changes, became the scene of our first parents' probation. Sin came ; and death, sin's shadow, followed ; for, as the Apostle tells, " Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Now the culprits stand trembling before their Maker, nor is there an angel who looks on, but expects to see the sword once more unsheathed, and hear the thunders, that shook thrones and principalities in heaven, roll, and peal, and crash among

the hills of earth. At this awful moment—at that eventful crisis—how unexpected the voice which came from the most excellent majesty—“Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.” To the surprise and admiration of angels, from out the light that veils the throne, a beautiful form steps forth, and Mercy, arresting the uplifted arm, turns its weapon away from man on her own bared, spotless, loving bosom. In the Son of God about to assume our nature, she says—“Lo! I come to do thy will, O God. Ready both to satisfy and suffer for his elect, Jesus interposes as he did afterwards for his disciples, when, stepping in between them and the armed band, he said—“I am he; let these go their way.” This brings us now to remark—

V. The mercy of God is glorified in redemption.

To do justice to God, to the Saviour, and to our subject, we must be careful to distinguish between pity and mercy. This is no example of a distinction without a difference. Some time ago, upon a cold winter day, we passed the door of a humble abode. A venerable old woman stood in the open doorway, facing a very wretched, ragged, starved like child. With one hand she offered a piece of bread—sharing her food with a poverty sorer than her own—while the other held a bowl of milk to the lips of the emaciated creature; and had you seen the benevolence that beamed in her aged face as she gazed on the orphan partaking of her bounty, you would have gone and done likewise—won over to

humanity by such a lovely and living picture of the truth that charity is twice blessed—blest in those that give, and blest in those that get. Now, however beautiful that scene was to the eye of humanity, it was not a display of mercy. Not mercy but pity moved that kind hand and gentle breast; and there the aged matron stood, an example of what is not uncommon among the poor—lofty charity in lowly life. Take another example:—A man builds an asylum for the destitute—a harbour of refuge for the wrecks of fortune. This may be an honourable monument to his memory—it may be, perhaps, but a monument of his vanity; but, whether it be erected for the benefit of the poor, or merely to gratify man's craving for posthumous fame, it is not a temple of mercy. This wandering mendicant, into whose hand you drop your money, as he begs his weary way to a grave, where, with his head sheltered beneath the sod, he shall feel neither cold nor hunger, appeals to your compassion, not to your mercy. He has done you no wrong—he has not stolen your goods, nor traduced your character, nor inflicted injury on your person, nor in any way whatever disturbed your peace; and so it is but pity that walks forth in the charity which shares its bread with the hungry, and spares a corner of an ample cloak to cover the nakedness of the poor.

Mercy is a higher attribute—an act of mercy is a far nobler achievement. She sits enthroned among the divine Graces. On her heavenly wings man rises to his loftiest elevation, and makes his nearest approach and closest similitude to God. This distinction be-

tween compassion and mercy is clearly enunciated in the sacred Scriptures. We are told that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" but the Lord is merciful to them that fear him not. He so loved the world as to give up his Son to die for it, but more than that, he commended his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We pity simple suffering; but let pity and love be extended to *guilty* suffering, and you have now the very element and essence of mercy. Mercy is the forgiveness of an injury; mercy is the pardon of a sinner. Smiling when justice frowns, and extending her favours out and beyond those who are merely without merit, she bestows them on those who are full of demerit.

Leaving the priest and Levite to walk on in their cold and selfish indifference, look at this good Samaritan. Bending over a bleeding form, he binds the wounds of a man whom robbers have assaulted, and these sanctimonious hypocrites have left to die. There, pity kneels beside suffering humanity, bears a brother's burden, and is afflicted in all his afflictions. From that beautiful spectacle turn now to Calvary; contemplate the cross upon which Jesus dies. Here—herself wounded, and bleeding—Mercy hangs over a wicked world, and with her tears sheds blessings on the head of murderers—"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." In fine, the objects of pity are sufferers who have been unfortunate; the objects of mercy are sufferers who have been guilty. And now understanding mercy to be the forgiveness of a wrong, the pardon of a sinner, the kindness of the

injured to the injurer, where, as in redemption—where but in redemption—is this crowning attribute of the Godhead to be seen? Save for redemption, this fairest jewel in the crown of heaven had been still concealed—unknown as a pearl shelled in the depths of ocean, or a diamond bedded in the dark mines of earth.

Guilty man embraced within her arms, how visible is mercy now! Where can we turn our eyes but she meets them? Pointing to the pit of perdition, do you say, look there! Well, we look there. And we see mercy there: not mercy enjoyed, but mercy, alas! rejected. Turning with horror from the sight, do we raise our eyes to heaven? There in every saint, robed in righteousness and crowned with glory, we behold a monument of mercy, and exclaim with David, “Thy mercy, oh Lord, is in the heavens.” Then as to this guilty world, are not the arms of mercy around it? They preserve it and sustain it. Every sinner is a monument of sparing, and every believer is a monument of saving mercy. However God’s people in their creeds, catechisms, and confessions may differ in their mode of expressing some points of faith, do not they all concur in this confession—each and all adopt these words—“Great is thy mercy toward me, thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell?” There is mercy above the ground, aye, and beneath the ground. There is mercy in the grave. You may see her form, and hear her sweetly singing upon a believer’s tomb. To the shelter of that quiet home God has brought many a dear one, and housed them safely before the storm burst. There,

as a gentle mother, earth has wrapped her mantle around the tender child; and, when the fierce tempest was beating upon their own heads, oh! have not many been thankful that some whom they loved, were now beyond its reach—sleeping quietly in the peaceful grave. Yes! and to believers themselves there is the kindest mercy in the grave. How can they doubt it? Were I the tenant of an old, crumbling cottage, through whose chinks and gaping rents the cold rain dripped, and frosty winds blew, it were, I think, a favour to pull down this crazy building and build me a palace in its room. Quarrel not with death's rude hand. It is rough but kind. It pulls this frail tabernacle to pieces, that, on the day when mortal shall put on immortality, mercy may raise from its dusty wreck, "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

In short, on everything I read the words, "The earth, oh Lord, is full of thy mercy." Blessings bestowed on the unworthy come in the form of mercies; and thus mercies arrive on the wings of every moment; mercies supply our table; mercies flow, and overflow in life's brimming cup. They fall in every shower, they shine in every sunbeam, and lie as thick around man's tent as desert manna in the days of old. Here, mercy runs to meet the returning prodigal, and opens her arms to fold the penitent to her bosom. Here, she pleads with the impenitent, and pronounces pardon over the chief of sinners. Here, she weeps with sufferers, or dries the tear upon sorrow's cheek. And here, eyeing the storm, she launches her lifeboat through foaming breakers, and

pulls for the wreck where souls are perishing. It is her blessed hand which rings the Sabbath bell, and her voice that, on savage shores or from the pulpits of a Christian land, proclaims a Saviour for the lost. None she despises; she despairs of none; and, not to be scared away by foulest sin, she stands by the bed of guilt, and, bending down to death's dull ear—when the twelfth hour is just about to strike—she looks into the glassy eye and cries, Believe, oh believe, only believe, “whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

VI. In redemption, God is glorified in the complete discomfiture of all his and our enemies.

He is glorified by Satan's defeat.

God, having made man in his own image, put him on probation. But was he, could he, be indifferent to the issue? Assuredly not; for, although he does not wish the death of guilt, he must, in a sense, have willed the triumph of innocence. What father ever saw his son leave for the field of battle, and did not follow him with wishes for his success? When the Spartan widow laced on the armour of her warrior boy, and, kissing his cheek, sent him away to the fight, in handing him his father's shield, she bade him return with it or on it—dead, or a conqueror—in honourable life or not less honourable death. And I cannot but believe that the life and honour of our first parents were as dear to God—dearer, far dearer, than ever son's to mother; for,

even in our guilt he commended his love to us by giving up his Son to die for us.

Well ; the hour of conflict arrived, and with it came God's enemy and man's—the Adversary, the Devil, the Evil One, Satan, the Prince of Darkness, the power and Potentate of Hell. A drowning man will seize the swimmer's limb, clasp his arms, nor relax the death-grasp, till after a brief, terrible struggle, they sink together. Thus it has often happened, most pitifully and miserably, that, in his unwise attempts to save himself, the perishing has been the death of a generous friend. But there is in sin a deep and damnable malignity, which, without hope or prospect of personal advantage, prompts the sinner to seize all within his grasp. That he may involve others in the same perdition with himself, he lays siege to honesty to conquer it, to virtue to corrupt it. Hence the danger of ungodly associates—"A companion of fools shall be destroyed." It was this diabolical principle, which we see every day at work, that carried havoc into Eden. Yet not this alone. Besides the inherent hatred that sin bears to holiness, Satan was smarting under his wounds, and, with a fire as unquenchable as that of his own hell, he burned to be avenged. Was there not a vacant throne in heaven ? Had that throne not once been his ? aye, and still been his, but that divine vengeance had hurled him into perdition ? God was his enemy, and he was God's. He would be revenged. He would defeat God's purposes ; cross, thwart, disappoint him ; and wreak his vengeance in the only way within a creature's

reach—he would wound a father's heart through the sides of his children.

Placed on probation, tested by means of the forbidden tree, man looked, lusted, ate, sinned, and fell. Satan triumphed. The ruins of Eden scattered around him, he stood upon the grave of human hopes, and, as it seemed, of heaven's intentions also. With what proud satisfaction he contemplated the triumph of his malignant subtilty! As he wrung the first tears from human eyes, I can fancy how he taunted his weeping victims with the question—"Where is now thy God?" Pharaoh, ere God had done with him, and he with God, got his question answered—"Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" The Devil also got his answer. In the fulness of time, and in a son of that woman, Satan encounters her God, to find in him not a match only, but a master.

When his vessel has broken in the storm, and Ajax stands unsheltered on a rock in mid-ocean, he is represented as in anger with the gods, shaking his clenched hand at heaven. In Eden, for a time, at least, Satan stands in a different and prouder position; he has conquered; he has won the victory. Who shall pluck it from his grasp? He tramples on earth, and laughs at heaven. Although on a grander scale, and involving much grander issues, the scene reminds us of the day when—with the Philistines clustered on this mountain, and Israel on that—there stalked out into the narrow valley, Goliath, the pride of Gath, a moving tower, terrible to look on, in stature six cubits and a span.

High above his dancing plume, the giant shakes a spear, shafted like a 'weaver's beam, and thunders up this challenge to the trembling host—"Am not I a Philistine? I defy the armies of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together."

So Satan stood, in bold defiance and unchallenged possession of the field; and now God might have left man to reap the full harvest of his sin and folly—to drink and drain the cup which his own hands had filled. In the words of Scripture, He had entered into "a covenant with death;" he had been at an agreement with hell;"—let him reap as he has sowed. But what then? Why, Satan then would have seemed to have and hold the advantage—would make himself appear a match for God; would have boasted ability and skill enough, by his own wiles, to thwart the purposes of eternal wisdom. In that event, all men should have perished; but in that event, would Jehovah's power have stood out as unchallengeable, or his glory as clear, as at this day? Assuredly not. And it was for the purpose of exhibiting his power and glory that God permitted this temporary triumph.

Observe yon skilful wrestler! He embraces his antagonist, and, lifting him from the ground, with the power of an athlete, he holds him aloft; ah! but he raises, to dash him back on the earth with a more crushing fall. So fared it with the Evil One. God permits him to push on his sap and mine, to scale the walls, to carry the citadel by assault, and plant for a time his defiant standard on the battlements of this world.

He does so, that from his proud eminence he may hurl Satan into a deeper hell ; and, angel's rejoicing in man's salvation, and devils discomfited in their leader's defeat—both friends and foes—might be constrained to say, "Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like his!" From this, believer! when providences are of the darkest, and thou canst not trace the footsteps of thy God, learn to place unquestioning confidence in his ways and wisdom.

While God is glorified by Satan's defeat, he is glorified also by the very time and manner of it.

You ask, why did four thousand years elapse between the promise and the promised One? I may reply, by asking you, why does this accomplished racer, who stands abreast of his competitor, not start along with him? Why, lingering by the starting post, does he give his opponent a long advantage? and then, springing forward on the feet of the wind, approach him, pass him, leave him lagging far behind? Why, but to prove more plainly his own superiority, and embitter the bitterness of an antagonist's defeat. Or, we may ask you, why, when the news of his friend's illness was conveyed to Galilee, did our Lord tarry there, nor, hurrying through Samaria, hasten to the relief of Lazarus? He does not even arrive just when the breath has left, and ere the form of him he loved is yet rigid and cold in death. He leaves Lazarus to die. He leaves Lazarus to be buried. He leaves Lazarus to lie four days rotting in the grave. Why this strange delay? why, but that

before the dead man's tomb he might stand forth all the more evidently, the conqueror of death, and Lord also of the grave.

On the alarm of war, the news fly through the land, beacon fires are blazing on every hill and headland, and before one hostile foot has touched the soil, hurrying from shepherd's hut and peasant's cottage, lonely glens and crowded cities, freemen line the beach to fight a country's enemies on a country's shores. What a contrast to that great battle of redemption! Here there is no such haste. Not for four days, nor even four years, but for the long period of four thousand years, Satan is left in all but undisturbed and undisputed possession of his conquest. God leaves the invader ample time to entrench himself; to found, to strengthen, to establish, to extend his kingdom. And why? but that a Redeemer's power might appear the more triumphant in its ignominious and total overthrow. And so Christ glorified himself; just as we should do, were we to leave the sapling in possession of the soil until it was developed into a full-grown tree, and then, bending on it more than a giant's strength, should lay its pride and glory in the dust. As a Redeemer, Jesus Christ shews himself to be the "Power" as well as the "Wisdom" of God. Such is the manner of redemption. And may I not take occasion from it to tell the oldest, hardest, most hoary sinner, that he should hope, and turn to God? He has left you long; He has left you till now; He has left you amid the infirmities of years to grow stronger in sin. Despair not of mercy! nor yield to

the fear that he has shut the door of hope! What if he has left you so long, just to shew how he can save at the very uttermost—call at the eleventh hour—and by the breath of his Spirit cause “dry bones” to live.

God is not only glorified in Satan's defeat, and also in the time and manner of it, but pre-eminently glorified in the instrument of it.

He was no veteran, the giant's match in years, experience, stature, or strength, who defeated Goliath. When the battle between the two nations was fought by their respective champions, fire flew not from opposing swords, nor were spears shivered on opposing shields; the valley shook not beneath the tread and collision of two giants; nor did victory hang in the balance, and anxious partisans endure the agony of suspense on confronting mountains, while the air resounded with the clash of arms, and blood gushed from gaping wounds. Never to appearance were two men more unequally matched. When the lines of Israel opened, and a youth, a beardless lad, clad in a shepherd's garb, with no weapon but a sling, and no confidence but God in heaven, stepped forth to measure his strength with the son of Anak, loud laughed the Philistine, and wit ran merrily through his countrymen's ranks. Ere one brief hour had run its course, they wept that laughed, and they laughed that wept. He who guides the sun in his path in heaven, guided the stone as, winged with death, and winged by prayer, it shot from the whirling sling. It sung from the shepherd's hand; it sank into the giant's

brow ; he reels, he staggers—and his armour making a mighty clash—he measures his long length upon the ground. Bounding like a young lion, David leaps upon his prey, and, leaving a headless carcass to feed the vultures, he returns to the ranks of shouting countrymen—in this hand the giant's sword, in that other his gory head. Old men bless the brave lad, and young men envy him, and happy mothers and laughing maidens sing his fame ; and ere that day's sun has set, there is music, and dancing, and feasting in the homes of Israel.

That was the type of a still brighter day, on which God glorified himself, discomfited and scattered his enemies, and restored a fallen house to more than its ancient honours. Man falls ; the world is lost ; Satan triumphs. And how does God pluck the victory from his hands ? He might have hurled thunderbolts at his head ; summoning the forces of heaven, he might have overwhelmed this enemy and borne him back to hell by legions of embattled angels. It is not so. He meets him, matches him, masters him by a solitary man. Out of the mouth of a babe and suckling he ordaineth strength. Beneath the heel of a man of sorrows he crushes the serpent's head. A son of man is the saviour of his race ; a brother rises up in the house of exile to redeem his brethren ; a conqueror is born in the conquered family. Never was tide of battle so strangely, so completely, so triumphantly turned. By one who died, God destroys "death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And now the babe of a

cradle, the nursling of a woman's bosom wears the crown and wields the sceptre of the universe.

“Give thanks then unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Oh give thanks unto the God of Gods; for his mercy endureth for ever. Oh give thanks unto the Lord of Lords; for his mercy endureth for ever; who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from our enemies. Oh give thanks unto the God of heaven, for his mercy endureth for ever.”

THE BENEFITS FLOWING FROM REDEMPTION.

I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 24.

MAN'S chief end is to glorify God; and God's chief end is to glorify himself. While that is an end worthy of the great Creator, it goes greatly to enlarge our interest in his works, and enhance their value in our eyes. That end dignifies the meanest, and gives loftiness to the humblest of them. When I know that for his own glory he paints each flower, gives the fish its silver scales, and sends forth the beetle armed in mail of gold, his creatures rise in my esteem. It may look a sickly fancy, but one almost feels reluctant to destroy the humblest flower or insect, lest we should silence one of the ten thousand voices which form the choir of nature, and swell the praises of nature's God. Is there a child whose heart does not warm towards the man who praises his father, or speaks honourably of the good man's memory? Now, the very same feeling inclines every affectionate child of God to love all the works that do his Father honour; and of all men he cannot fail to enjoy the most exquisite pleasure in the beauties of

nature, who carries to her fields a pious spirit, and sees his Father mirrored in them all; hears his praise sweetly sung in the voices of groves, or nobly pealed in the roar of thunder. Such was the spirit of one—a venerable patriarch—who shed on a very humble station the lustre of brilliant graces. When the storm cleared the street, and sent others in haste to their homes, he was wont to leave his loom, and, going forth, stand with upturned face, raised eye, and his grey head uncovered, to watch the flash, and listen to the music of the roaring thunder. How fine his reply to those who expressed their wonder at his aspect and attitude—"It's my Father's voice, and I like well to hear it." What a sublime example of the perfect love that casteth out fear! "Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Now, as it ennobles nature—so that the sun shines more bright, and the flowers look more beautiful, and there is a grander majesty in the rolling sea—when we know that God does all things for his own glory, it greatly enhances the preciousness of salvation to know, that in the kingdom of grace he has the self-same end in view. If God saves—not because we deserve mercy—but that his own great mercy may be illustrated in saving, ah! then there is hope for me—Yes, although thou wert an adulterer, a thief, a murderer, the vile wretch who spit in Jesus' face, the ruffian who forced the thorny crown deep into his bleeding brow, although thou wert that very soldier who buried the lance in his side, and just returning from Calvary, with the blood of

Christ's heart red on thy spear head, I would stop thee in thy way to say, there is hope for thee. Oh, this has gilded the edges of guilt's darkest cloud, and inspired with hope souls which had otherwise sunk into despair. In circumstances where we would have been dumb—opening not the mouth—when called to the dying bed of vilest, lowest sin, it has unsealed our lips, and lent wings to prayer. Of the preacher, whose walk lies among the most wretched, hopeless, and abandoned, this truth says, since God saves for his own glory, “loose him, and let him go.” Go to offer Christ (as I do to-day) to the chief of sinners; like a sunbeam passing undefiled through the foulest atmosphere, go in thy heavenly purity where the basest of thy race is perishing; nor shrink from this loathsome guilt, but with Jesus' pity and his tears, lift up her dying head, and in the mercy of God in Christ, let her drink the wine of love out of its cup of gold. If the worse a patient is, if the fiercer his fever burns, if the deeper his wound has penetrated, so much the greater is the glory of the physician who cures him; then the worse a sinner is, the greater Christ's glory when he saves him. But for this, that God in every case saves men, not out of regard to their merit, but his glory, what could sustain the faith of him who, in preaching the Gospel to unconverted men, has to run his horses on a rock, and plough there with oxen; to sow the seed of God's blessed word under the most unfavourable circumstances; to write sermons for dead men, and preach them to dry bones. Nothing but faith in this could carry us to the top of Carmel,

not seven, but seventy times seven, to look abroad over the sea of mercy, and wait till the cloud of blessing rose on the distant horizon, and, spreading over the heavens, discharged its treasures on a barren land. "Seeing we have *this* ministry we faint not."

Having already attempted to shew how God glorifies himself in redemption, we shall now address ourselves to the subject matter of the text, where we are taught that redemption brings good to man as well as glory to God. And it appears from the text—

I. In carrying out the work of redemption, God will call his people out of the world. "I will take you from among the heathen."

By nature his people are no better than other people. They were no better till grace made them so. The Apostle settles that point by the question, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" and the confession, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Our Lord teaches the same doctrine in these brief but expressive parables—"Two women are grinding at the mill; one is taken, and another left." "Two men are in one field; the one is taken, and the other left." "Two men are in one bed; one is taken, and another left." Christ states the truth, how often does providence supply the commentary? Here are two children; they were born of one mother; nestled in one bosom; rocked in one cradle; baptized in one font; reared under the same roof, they grew up under the same training, sat under the same ministry,

and in death not divided, they are sleeping now, where their dust commingles, in the same grave. But the one is taken, and the other left. This, a child of God, ascends to heaven; the other, alas! is lost. Who dare challenge the justice of God? Mysterious subject! "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The truth is, that by nature this world is sunk in sin, and in a sense all men are idolaters. In the days of old, it is said that Egypt had more gods than men. Elsewhere than in Egypt, everywhere, as the Bible says, "there be lords many and gods many." The Hindu reckons his divinities by thousands and tens of thousands; yet the world has a larger Pantheon—as many Gods as it has objects, be they innocent or guilty, which usurp the place of Jehovah, and dethrone him in the creature's heart. Nor are men less idolaters if drunkards, though they pour out no libation to Bacchus, the god of wine; nor less idolaters, if impure, that they burn no incense at the shrine of Venus; nor less idolaters, if lovers of wealth, that they do not mould their gold into an image of Plutus, and, giving a shrine to what lies hoarded in their coffers, offer it their morning and evening prayers. He has been an idolater, who, rebelling against providence, follows the hearse of a confined god; he made an idol of wife or child; and now, when the robber of all our homes has stolen these his gods away, and bears off his plunder to

the grave, the feelings of that man's heart may be expressed in Micah's complaint to the Danite robbers, "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?" Since man, therefore, in his natural state, is—although not in fact—in spirit as much an idolator as the Pagans of any heathen land, it may be justly said of all who have been converted by the grace of God, that he has "taken them from among the heathen."

II. The power of divine grace is strikingly displayed in this effectual calling.

It is a remarkable fact, that while the baser metals are often diffused through the body of the rocks, gold and silver lie in veins—collected together in distinct metallic masses. They are *in* the rocks, but not *of* the rocks. Some believe that there was a time, long gone by, when—like other metals—these lay in intimate union with the mass of rock, until, by virtue of some mysterious electric agency, their scattered atoms were put in motion, and, being made to pass through the solid stone, were aggregated in those shining veins, where they now lie to the miner's hand. Gold and silver are the emblems of God's people. And as by some power in nature God has separated these emblems from the base and common earths, even so by the power of his grace will he separate his chosen from a reprobate and rejected world. They shall come at his call. He will "say to

the north, Give up ; and to the south, keep not back ; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." The corruption of nature, circumstances of temptation, an evil world, the hostility of hell, all interpose between his purpose and the objects of his mercy. Difficulties in the way these, that tower up into a mountain ! Yet fear not. He will make up the number of his chosen. "Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

His grace shall prove sufficient. No doubt grace has a great work to do. Think from what an abominable life, see from what abandoned company God calls some to piety on earth and glory in heaven. Look at this Manasseh or at that Magdalene. How different their Sabbaths now from what once they were ! How different their society now from the associates with whom in mad and frantic dance, they once went whirling round the mouth of the burning pit ! Another and another, and another plunge shrieking into the abyss ; that stops not the dance ; they drown the lost one's cry in louder music ; and in giddier whirl dance on, as little deterred by the fate of their fellows, as the insects that on an autumn evening dash one upon another into the flame of our candle. Ah, when God's saints look down from their elevation on the depths of guilt into which grace descended, and from whence it raised them, they are not satisfied to sing, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the thrones of glory." They prune their wings for a higher

flight; they tune their harps to a higher strain. Lost in wonder, love, and praise, they adopt the words which a humble-minded but eminent Christian insisted should be engraved upon her tombstone—"How great is thy mercy toward me," "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell?" It is in a state of deep ungodliness—without God, without the love of God, without the holiness that shall see God, without true purity of heart, without solid peace of conscience—that grace finds all it saves. Such, I know, is not the judgment of the world. Nor do I deny but that many are very lovely in the mere bloom and beauty of natural virtue—so beautiful, so very beautiful, that we cannot help loving them. Is there sin in that? No; for even Jesus loved the young ruler at the very time when he refused to follow him. But then, with much that is attractive in the graces of the natural man, they have the same nature, and lie under the self same condemnation, as a world that liveth in wickedness, and lieth under sentence of death. An old writer uses a rough but true expression; he says that "man in his natural state is half a devil and half a beast." How wonderful the grace which changes such a monster into the image of God; which converts the basest metal into the purest gold!

It is indeed amazing to see what grace will do, and where grace will grow; in what unlikely places God has his people, and out of what unfavourable circumstances he calls them. I have seen a tree proudly crowning the summit of a naked rock; and there it stood—in search of food sending its roots out over the bare stone,

and down into every cranny—securely anchored by these moorings to the stormy crag. We have wondered how it grew up there, amid such rough nursing, how it could have survived many a wintry blast, and where, indeed, it found either food or footing. Yet, like one who has become familiar with hardship and adversities, it has lived and grown ; it has stood erect on its weather-beaten crag when the pride of the valley has bent to the storm ; and, like brave men, who think not of yielding, but nail their colours to the mast, it has maintained its defiant position, and kept its green flag waving on nature's topmost battlements.

More wonderful still, is it to see where the grace of God will live and grow. Tender exotic ! plant brought from a more genial clime ! one would suppose that it would require the kindest nursing and most propitious circumstances ; yet look here—A Daniel is bred for God, and for the bravest services in his cause, in no pious home of Israel ; he breathes unhurt the poison, and grows in saintship amid the gross impurities of a heathen palace. Paul was a persecutor, and is called to be a preacher—he was a murderer, and becomes a martyr ; once no Pharisee so proud, now no publican so humble. Like those fabled monsters, which sailing on broad and scaly wings, descended on their prey with streams of fire issuing from their formidable mouths, he took his flight to Damascus “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” Seeing this from his throne in heaven Jesus descends, appears in person to encounter this terrible persecutor, subdues

him, and selects him for his chiefest apostle. He bids him wash the blood of Stephen from his hands, and go preach the Gospel. And where afterwards has this very man some of his most devoted friends? where, but in Caesar's household? Truly nothing is impossible with God. What can more strikingly express the power of his all-sufficient grace than the words of John Newton? Asked by one whether he thought that the heathen could be converted, he replied, "I have never doubted that God could convert the heathen, since he converted me."

"Never despair," should be the motto of the Christian; and how should it keep hope alive under the darkest and most desponding circumstances, to see God calling grace out of the foulest sin? Look at this cold creeping worm! Playful childhood shrinks shuddering from its cold slimy touch; yet a few weeks, and with merry laugh and feet that press the flowery meadow, that same childhood is hunting an insect which never lights upon the ground, but—flitting in painted beauty from flower to flower—drinks honied nectar from their cups, and sleeps the short summer night away in the bosom of their perfumes. If that is the same boy, this is no less the self-same creature. Change most wonderful! yet but an earthly and imperfect emblem of the divine transformation wrought on those who are "transformed by the renewing of their minds." Glorious change! Have you experienced its gracious influences? Would God they were felt by all of us! You have it here in this woman, who, grieved in her mind, lies

a-weeping at the feet of Jesus, nor says anything, nor does anything, but washes them with tears, and, shaking out her locks, wipes them with the hairs of her head. She was a sinner. Her condition had been the basest; her bread the bitterest; her company the worst. She is casting off her vile sinful slough. She leaves it. She appears a new creature. She is radiant with heavenly beauty; and now rising on the outspread wings of faith and love, she mounts with her Lord to heaven. How encouraging the wonders of converting grace! Let us despair of none—neither of ourselves nor any one else.

III. God will make up the number of his people.

“I will gather you out of all countries.” There are some gatherings in this world which are largely alloyed with pain. Christmas, the New Year, or a birthday time comes round, summoning the members of a scattered family. The circle is again formed; but, like that of men who have been standing under fire, and closing up their broken ranks, how is it contracted from former years! There are well-remembered faces, and voices, and forms, that are missing here; and the family group, which looks down from the picture on the wall, is larger than the living company met at table. Some are dead and gone—“Joseph is not, and Simeon is not;” and a dark cloud hangs on a mother’s brow, for on the cheek of yet another her anxious eye, quick to

see, discovers an ominous spot that threatens to "take Benjamin away."

There is a gathering, also, when, at the close of a hard-fought day, the roll of the regiment is called, and to familiar names there comes back no answer. How small the band who meet at night compared with the morning muster! As the day wore on, and the ranks grew thinner, and the "red line" grew less and less, they came back from each onset like a wave flung upon an iron shore, and every shock they stood, and charge which they repelled, left broad gaps to fill. And now when the fight is over, and the broken hosts muster on the field, to many a gallant soldier in vain the trumpet sounds, or war-pipe blows the gathering of the clan. Alas, for the day! They shall answer no trumpet but that which calls a world to judgment.

When daylight breaks on the shore of the shipwreck, there is also a mustering and reckoning of numbers. There, a mother clasps and kisses the living babe which the waves had plucked from her arms, and she never hoped more to see; and here, a true brother cheers the boy whom he held in a grasp strong as death, while, with the other hand buffeting the billows, he bore him safely to the beach. But others, less fortunate, are wringing their hands in the wildness of their grief. Flying from group to group, distracted mothers cry, "Where is my child?" With the dead on their knees, some sit stunned by sorrow; frightful to look upon! speechless, tearless, motionless, as if turned into stone; while some, wild, raving, shrieking, frantic, stand on the

shores of the sullen sea, and, stamping on its sands, demand back their dead.

These are mournful musterings. In striking contrast to them look at this gathering on Melita's shore :—It was a frightful storm ; the coast unknown ; the ship grounds in deep water with nigh three hundred souls on board. The night before, the boats had been cut adrift, and now not a boat—if boats could live in such a swell—to save them. The swimmers, who strip and plunge into the sea, may perchance reach the shore, but none else shall cheat the deep of its prey. Yet, when there is not another head among the billows—when the last survivor has climbed the beach—they muster ; and soldiers, sailors, prisoners,—all are there. Paul got their lives, and not one has gone amissing, not a soul has perished. “Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship ;” but, by whatever way it came to pass, it did come to pass, as the narrative tells—“they escaped all safe to land.”

Even so shall it be with those of whom Jesus says, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. My father that gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” Happy those who sail in the ship, and have embarked in the same good cause with Christ. What they have committed to him, he will keep until the great day. And when all earthly schemes are foundered, and life itself has become a wreck—plunging us amid the billows of eternity's shore—and this old world itself is stranded and breaks up like a worn out ship—then

all who are Christ's shall be safe at the last day's muster, not one of them shall be amissing. Sooner or later all shall reach in safety the heavenly coast. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and "all that his Father hath given him he shall keep."

But my text tells us not only that He will gather his people, but gather them "out of all countries." Let those mark that, who, indulging an extravagant patriotism, or shrivelled up in the cold and narrow spirit of bigotry, allow themselves to "limit the Holy One of Israel," and say with the Jews of old, "We are the people of the Lord; the temple of the Lord are we." "We have Abraham to our father." Alas! we are all too prone to think that we stand allied to Jesus in closer relationship than others, even as Benjamin to Joseph; others may be brothers, ours is a closer brotherhood: we are not only father's but mother's sons. Now, we are patriotic enough to hope much for our country—for a land which has been crimsoned with precious blood, consecrated by prayers, and whose almost every mountain, as Rutherford said, "has been flowered with martyrs." We sympathise, also, with domestic affection; and the hope that families—so dear to us as our own—shall rise from the place of many graves to dwell together in the house of many mansions. Still, heaven, like the starry firmament which encompasses our globe, is as near other countries as our own. God has people both where we look not for them, and know not of them. A hundred prophets lie secreted in Obadiah's cave; and when Elijah, wrapped in his mantle, stands before

the God of the storm and calm, and the "still small voice," complaining "they have slain thy prophets, and I, even I only am left," he is surprised to hear of the seven thousand in Israel, as true men as he, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. We may be astonished to miss some whom we calculated on meeting in heaven, we shall be astonished to see some there whom we never expected.

The Gospel is indigenous in no country, and yet belongs to all. Every sea is not paved with pearl shells ; nor does every soil grow vines and stately palms, nor does every mine sparkle with precious gems, nor do the streams of every land roll their waters over golden sands. These symbols of grace have a narrow range ; not grace herself. She owns no lines of latitude or longitude. All climates are one to her. She wears no party badge ; and belongs neither to class nor colour. She takes no objection to a negro's skin. He, whom his white oppressor shrunk from worshipping with, eating with, sailing with, or dwelling with on earth, shall feast at a banquet, and worship in a temple, and reign in a kingdom where his master may never be ; and when—as may often happen—the white skin is shut out, and the black man, now and for ever free, passes in at the celestial gate, it shall furnish but another illustration of the truth, that salvation is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

With this truth, as by a zone of love, elastic enough to be stretched round the globe, we would bind mankind together. Let it awaken in Christian hearts an interest

in every land, and an affection for every race. Humanity rejoices with piety in the prospects that it opens. The distant natives of the Poles and Equator shall be associated in heaven; they who have never met in earth shall meet there; they who never could agree on earth shall agree there; the desire of our hearts shall be accomplished there; up there those who, scowled at by bigots, and pitied by many as amiable visionaries, have sought a closer union among God's children here, shall have their fondest wishes gratified. Turning from the dreadful wars that now shake the earth, and the hardly less painful battlefields of churches, it is a delightful change to contemplate this general assembly, where—Jesus himself presiding—the representatives of all nations, tribes, languages, sects and parties, are met to sing the jubilee of universal peace, and celebrate the funeral of their differences. Over that grave no tears are shed; beside it no pale mourners stand; within it all quarrels and controversies, with their weapons of war, are buried without fear of resurrection; above it heaven rises, a glorious temple dedicated to eternal concord, “whose builder and maker is God.”

In the present time, often dishonoured by their quarrels, and always by their separation, Jesus shall then be glorified in all his saints. It is the dust and the rust which the liquid mercury has contracted that impair the brilliancy of its lustre, and prevent the union of its divided globules. And what is it that now keeps true Christians apart but earthly contaminations and unworthy passions? From these let them be purified

either by the genial fires of love, or the sharp fires of suffering, and union will follow—as it follows when the globules of quicksilver, cleansed from impurities, brought into contact, and animated as by mutual affection, run into each other's embraces to form one brilliant and shining mass. May God give his Spirit of love and unity for an end so blessed—to achieve a consummation so devoutly to be wished for. The prophecy fulfilled which foretells this union, then, the redeemed of the cross, and elect of God, shall make up a countless company, one which no man can number—multitudes, millions, myriads—offering such a contrast to the small company who in the days of his flesh followed the steps of the Man of Sorrows, that we shall hear these words no more—“Ye are a little flock.”

“He cometh, he cometh to judge the earth;” and how? after what manner, and in what royal state? “Behold he cometh with clouds”—clouds, that on their nearer approach to earth, when the general mass resolves itself into individual objects, may be found to consist of an innumerable number of winged and shining angels. On that grand occasion, the saints—countless as the atoms that float in the vapours, or the drops that fall in the showers of the sky—shall form, to use Paul's expression, “a cloud of witnesses.” Receiving continual accessions, already they form a cloud in heaven; one, that, to the eye of faith, resembles those nebulous spots, which, in consequence of their great distance, shine only with a faint luminosity in the far away depths of the starry firmament, and yet resolve themselves, under the

telescope of the astronomer, into a countless aggregate of burning suns.

IV. We are assured that God will bring all his people to glory, by the fact that his own honour, as well as their welfare, is concerned in the matter.

In that lay the salvation of ancient Israel. "How long will this people provoke me? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them; and I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Thus spake the Lord to Moses, and how did he reply? He had certainly a great temptation to return no answer but let things take their course, since in that event the issue would bring him and his family such great advantage. Type of the Saviour, he flung himself between justice and her culprits. He ventures to remonstrate with God. He sets himself to shew, that the destruction of Israel—although the just punishment of their sins—might militate against God's declarative honour, and expose it to suspicion; and that, therefore, although Jehovah could not spare them for their sakes, he should spare them for his own. Moses was concerned for the fate of his countrymen. Like a true patriot, he declined to rise on their ruins; but still more deeply concerned for the honour of God, he takes courage to reply, "Then the Egyptian shall hear it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord *was*

not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.”

As it was then, so is it now. God’s honour, and truth, and covenant are all concerned—are, so to speak, compromised to make good the promise, that he will bring his redeemed to glory. It is, indeed, no easy work to bring believers to glory. When I think of the sins to be forgiven, and the difficulties to be overcome, the wonder seems not that few reach heaven, but that any get there. We have read of voyages, where for nights the sailors enjoyed no sleep, and for days saw no sun. Lying at one time becalmed beneath a fiery sky, at another time shivering amid fields of ice; here with sunken rocks around them, and treacherous currents there sweeping them on dangerous reefs; exposed to sudden squalls, long dark nights, and fearful tempests, the wonder was that their battered ship ever reached her port. I select a case of recent occurrence. Some while ago a vessel entered one of our western harbours and the town poured out to see her. Well they might. She had left the American shore with a large and an able-bodied crew. They have hardly lost sight of land when the pestilence boards them; victim drops after victim; another and another is committed to the deep; from deck to deck, from yard to yard she pursues her prey; nor does she spread her wings to leave, till but two survive to work that ill-fated ship over the broad waters of a wintry sea. And when, with Providence at the helm, these two men, worn by toil and watching

to ghastly skeletons, have brought their bark to land, and now kiss once more wives and little ones they never thought more to see, and step once more on a green earth they never more hoped to touch, men throng the pier to see the sight, and hear the adventures of a voyage brought against such dreadful odds to such a happy issue.

Yet there is never a bark drops anchor in heaven, nor a weary voyager steps out on its celestial strand, but is a still greater wonder. Save for the assurance that what God hath begun He will finish—save for the promise that what concerns his people He will perfect—Oh, how often would our hope of final blessedness altogether expire. Well might David say, “I had fainted unless I had believed.” And knowing what we know, and feeling what we feel, how entirely may we acquiesce in the old remark, that the greatest wonder we shall see in heaven, shall be to see ourselves there.

Yet let Christians take comfort. Your good and God’s glory ever run in the same direction. They are the parallel rails on which the chariot of salvation rolls. They shall bring you to the Jerusalem above. To compare small things with great, our heavenward journey with its dangers and changes, has sometimes appeared to me like that of a passenger to our own lovely city. On these iron roads he now rolls along rich and fertile plains; now, raised to a dangerous and dizzy height he flies across intervening valleys; now he rushes through a narrow gorge cut in the solid rock, with nothing seen but heaven; now, boring into the earth, he dashes into some gaping cavern, for a while losing sight even of

heaven itself, and then again he sweeps forth and on in sunshine, till at length the domes, and towers, and temples of the city burst on his view. And, these close at hand, he concludes his journey by passing through an emblem of death. He enters a gloomy arch, advances slowly in darkness through a place of graves, and then all of a sudden, emerges into day, to feast his eyes on the glorious scenery, and receive the congratulations of waiting friends, as he finds himself safe "in the midst of the city."

MAN JUSTIFIED.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.—

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 25.

IN the earliest peopled regions of the world, there still stand some ancient monuments, bold in plan, and colossal in dimensions, defying both time and change. Raised, as these rude structures were, in the very infancy of art, and ere the giant arms of machinery had grown into their present strength, they are objects of deep interest both to the architect and antiquary. How came these great stones there? By what means or machinery did man, in days so rude, raise such ponderous masses?

Science has questions as inexplicable to put regarding the works of nature. We climb a mountain range, and, standing on its apex, see valley and plain stretching far away to meet the ocean, that lies, gleaming like a silver border, on the dim and distant horizon. After enthusiastically expatiating over the glory and beauties of the scene, our eye turns downwards, and lights on a very unexpected object—a shell—a plant—a zoophyte, whose proper *habitat* is the low sea-shore—or, lower

still, down in the dark depths of ocean—embedded in the rock. How came it here? what business has it here? We at once conclude, that, although now raised some thousand feet above the sea, the platform on which we stand had once been an ocean's bed. And he would be a dull and stupid man, in whose mind the question would not arise, what was that agent of tremendous power which, upheaving the crust of earth, has turned the floor of a sea, where corals grew, and fish swam, into a mountain crag whereon eagles build their nest.

In the Providence which determines the lot of man, history presents subjects not less interesting. It is a curious thing to consider how a sea shell came to be embedded in the summit of a mountain crag. It is even a curious thing to watch the progress of a caterpillar as it climbs up tree or wall to the place of its apparent death and beautiful resurrection. It is still more interesting to see a man fighting, toiling, tearing, his way up from the bottom, to the sunny but often cold and stormy pinnacles of society; so that, perhaps, when dead, he, whose birth a cottage saw, lies in state within a palace. There are all manner of ways by which men rise in the world. Some, flung up by national convulsions, rise like the fire stones shot from a volcano's mouth; they flare for a little, and then are lost in night. Some like sea-weed or a hollow shell, are thrown up by the wave of popular agitation, only by its reflux to be swept back into their original obscurity. Some rise in times of trouble and of turmoil, like the dust and light

straws of the whirlwind; and the lighter they are the more sure are they to rise. Some ascend by the foul and slippery paths of crime; rising on their neighbours' shoulders, and building dishonest fortunes on honest men's ruin. While some,—being amid all the mysteries of Providence, witnesses that there is a just God upon earth,—illustrate the common adage, "Honesty is the best policy," and the still better saying of Scripture, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But there is no ascent so interesting to study, or by those who are fired with a holy ambition, so blessed to emulate, as that of a sinner into a saint—of a soul to glory.

That man enjoys one of the charms of history, and reads one of the strangest chapters in the book of providence, who traces the successive steps by which great actors in the theatre of this world have mounted to fame and fortune out of the deepest obscurity. Yet to us there are inquiries of greater interest than these. Few rise from cottages to be kings—nor are such giddy elevations desirable; most men slip the foot, fall and are crushed ere they arrive at the top of their ambition; the few who have reached it do so to learn that "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." It is of little moment to me, how this base-born but brave peasant reached a throne; but to me it is everything to know how this sinner became a saint, and from being the slave of Satan and very drudge of sin rose to a crown in heaven—to be a king and priest to God. If I am engrossed

with the momentous interests of eternity, if I have not yet made my calling sure, if I am still lying in the anxieties and darkness of spiritual distress, it will be of little importance to me, how the shell, which once lay in the depths of ocean, has been raised into the light and regions of the sunny air, but to me it is everything to know, how I, lying buried beneath the wrath of God, can be raised to the sunshine of his peace and favour. To me the question is of the highest importance, which the elder put to John, when, pointing to the innumerable multitude, "who stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," he said, "who are these, and whence came they?" I am deeply interested to know by what means these, each one—originally like myself—a being of sin and guilt, escaped the wrath of God, and rose to such lofty favour? Recognising in that company, one, and another, and yet another—who were the chief of sinners, I take heart to say, if they have got up there, why should not I? The door that was wide enough and high enough for them, can neither be too straight nor too low for me. These questions, in other words, how does God save the sinner? and what am I to do to be saved?—questions, the most important which you can ask, or I can attempt to answer, are those at which, in the progress of these discourses, we are now arrived.

I intend, God helping me, to set forth the means by which he who is most willing to save sinners, accomplishes his generous and gracious purpose. I am now to shew you that famous breach by which the soldiers of

the cross, pressing on behind their captain, with banners flying and sword in hand, have taken the kingdom, and, trampling under foot the body of sin, have entered into glory with a holy violence. We are now to look upon that famous ladder which the hand of God has let down from heaven, and by which Abel, and Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Daniel, and Peter, and Paul, and the Marys, and Dorcas, and Phoebe, —martyrs and confessors, prophets and saints—following each other, have scaled the walls of glory, and entered into possession of the celestial city. And now, as the angel who had blown the coal and baked the bread beside the lonely sleeper—for such things angels will do for saints—woke Elijah and said to him, “rise and eat;” with this ladder within your reach—you at its foot, and heaven at its top—I say rise and climb. What meanest thou, O sleeper? What do you sleeping there? The slightest turn, and you roll over into the pit, upon whose dreadful edge the sinner has his bed. Rouse thee up, rise and climb; God helping thee, by faith lay hold of Him who says—“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

In entering upon the subject of a sinner’s justification, I remark—

I. God’s people are not chosen because they are holy.

They are chosen that they may become holy, not because they have become so. It is after God elects that God justifies, as it is after he has justified that he

sanctifies. This appears—stands out most visibly—in the very terms of the text, “*then* will I sprinkle clean water upon you.” Do not, I pray you, suppose that we disparage holiness. Among the doctrines of grace holiness holds a most important place; a place so important—so prominent and conspicuous—that the notion, once current, that the doctrine of a free salvation through the mercy of God and the merits of Christ alone is unfavourable to the interests of morality, can only be ascribed to the malice of the natural heart, or the grossest ignorance. These doctrines set forth the love of Christ as a believer’s great motive power, and it might be a sufficient refutation of the calumny to quote the just and glowing exclamation of the poet—

“Thou bleeding Lamb!
The best morality is love of Thee.”

But what place in the scheme of grace do we assign to holiness? what language do we hold regarding it? We distinctly and solemnly aver that without holiness no man shall see God. Could more be asked or said than that? We say so to all—to the sovereign on his throne we say, Without holiness thou shalt never wear a crown in heaven; to the minister in his pulpit we say, Without holiness thou shalt never minister before the Throne—thou mayst save others, but shall be thyself a castaway; to the communicant at the table we say, Without holiness thou shalt never sit at the marriage supper of the Lamb; thou mayst drink of the juice of the grape—but shalt never drink the new wine of his “Father’s kingdom;” we say to all men, “If any

man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." You may have his name; but that is worth nothing, unless with the name you have received his nature—the nature of one who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Grace may make you his; but whatever you may become, you are not so now, except there be germinating in you the very mind of him who was holiness in the flesh—incarnate virtue. We ever echo the exhortation of the apostle, "Be careful to maintain good works."

This is surely no lax or immoral creed. So far from holding good works cheap, we say that by them God is glorified, by them faith is justified, and by them on the great day of judgment shall you, and I, and every man be tried. You are not to be justified by works, but you are to be judged by works. The rule of that day shall be this—"The tree is known by his fruit," "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Are any of you, then, living in sin—known, habitual, cherished sin—and yet in hope? Oh, how great is your mistake! You may be saved *from*, you cannot be saved *in* your sins. One sin, even one! is the "dead fly, that maketh the apothecary's ointment to stink;"—is the leak, however small and concealed from the public eye, which, if not stopped, fills and sinks the ship. Hell enters at the smallest breach of God's law, and the smallest sin is thus an enormous evil. Men shrink from poverty, misfortune, disease, bereavement, as evils! There is no radical evil in this world but sin; if you still persist in

calling other things evils, sin is their parent—these are her hateful progeny. No sin, no suffering; no sin, no sorrow; no sin, no sting, nor death, nor grave, nor hell. We change the saying of Paul, and, so changed, apply to sins what he spoke of the sailors. He said of the seamen, *Except* these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. To prevail on you to abandon and cast your sins—these Jonahs—overboard, we say, *If* these abide ye cannot be saved.

Now, while maintaining to the utmost, that holiness is essential to salvation, we nevertheless regard it as of the highest importance to assign holiness a right and not a wrong place in our system. Should earthquakes shake the ground, or even storms the air, that pyramid must stand unsafely which according to the poet,

“Like an inverted cone,
Wants the proper base to stand upon.”

That body were a monster in nature, hideous of aspect, and happily of brief existence, which should have its organs and members so misplaced, that the hands should occupy the place of the feet, and the heart should beat in the cavity of the brain. Who does not know that the fruitfulness, beauty, the very life of a tree, depends not only on its having roots and branches, but on these members being placed in their natural order? Let a tree be planted upside down—set the roots in the air and the boughs in the earth—and I need not ask how much fruit it would yield, nor how many seasons the unhappy plant would survive such barbarous and blundering treatment.

Well, if it be of such consequence in these things not to depart from the order established in nature, I can certainly affirm that it is of as much consequence not to depart from the order established in the kingdom of grace. It is not enough that you hold right doctrines—nay in a sense hold all the doctrines. The right doctrines must be in the right places. Your astronomy may include all the bodies that enter into our solar system, but if it give a satellite the imperial position of the sun, your system passes into inextricable confusion. The machine may have all its parts, but, if the great wheel that moves them, or the balance wheel that regulates them, revolve on any shaft but its own, the entire mechanism either stops, or flies round in furious and destructive disorder. Even so, although all the doctrines of the Gospel be present in our creed, we may commit a great, a dangerous—possibly a fatal mistake—by any mal-arrangement that would put these out of their proper place. Such is their mistake who build election upon holiness—not holiness upon election; who regard good works, not as the result, but the cause of God's mercy; and who, mistaking the root for the fruit, fancy that God adopts men because they are holy; when, in point of fact, he makes them holy, just because he has adopted them.

This, believe me, is not an example of the nice and fine distinctions which theologians have spun; nor an example of those secondary matters about which bigots may contend, but good men need give themselves no trouble. Let it look a small matter: what great effects

do some small things produce? A slight wedge of wood, a small pebble lying upon the slip, prevents the vessel from being launched on the bosom of a tide that rises to receive her in its arms; and when the full tide of love was flowing in Jesus' heart, and his bosom was open to receive the sinner, and everything was conspiring to his salvation, in such happy circumstances, have not we seen the notion, that a man must be holy before he goes to Christ, act obstructively and arrest a soul that had already moved, advanced, got some way in its course, and, as we thought, was off for heaven? This is a delusion of the enemy of souls; and I believe it to be a common, as it is a most dangerous wile of Satan. When conscience gets so uneasy, that for all the devil's rocking it won't sleep, and men grow anxious about their eternal interests, and will be out of the "City of Destruction," it is no uncommon thing with him to send them away in a wrong direction. Thus deluded, are you trying to make yourselves more pure and more penitent, that you may have some right to divine mercy? Let me tell you that you are trying to weave ropes of sand, and he who has set you to a task so impracticable knows right well that by and bye you will abandon it in despair; and then, perhaps, returning to your old sins, like a drunkard to his cups after an irksome season of sobriety, you shall furnish another illustration of the saying—"The last state of that man is worse than the first."

With God's help I would endeavour to disabuse your minds of such an error. For that purpose, let me

borrow an illustration from an asylum, which, like the Gospel which it teaches, in the form of a ragged school, opens its loving arms to the outcast, and seeks to train up to God and glory the poor children whom its piety and pity have adopted. On entering these blessed doors—the gate of hope to many—your attention is caught by a child, who is supported there by the bounty of some generous Christian. The boy now can spell his way through a Bible—once a sealed book to him; he knows now, and, in tones fitted to melt any heart, he sweetly sings of a Saviour, of whom once he knew not even the name. These little hands are now skilful to weave the net or ply the shuttle, which once were alert only to steal, or held out in their pitiful emaciation to plead for charity. And there is such sharp intelligence in that bright eye, and such an open air of honesty in his beaming face, and such attention to cleanliness appears in his dress and person, and such buoyancy in his whole bearing, as if hope hailed a brighter future for that poor child, that these bespeak your favour. But do you suppose, that these were the child's passport to this asylum? Do you suppose, that when he wandered, an outcast upon the winter streets, shoeless among the snow, shivering in the cold, it was what now so interests you that caught the eye of pity? Do you suppose, that to these habits and accomplishments, learned under a parental roof, the child owed his adoption? How great your mistake! This were to turn things “upside down.” He was adopted, not for the sake of these, but notwithstanding the want of them. It

was that which, if I may so speak, carried his election. It was his wretchedness that saved him. It was his very misery—when he stood there with sadness in his face, and beggary on his back and hunger in his looks, cold, naked, wicked, wretched—which pled for him. These with more power than eloquence, melted men's hearts and gained his cause. The clean hands, and rosy cheek, and eye lighted up with intelligence, and decent habits, and useful arts, and Bible knowledge, and all which now wins our regard, are the consequences of his adoption, and never were nor could be its cause. Even so is it with holy habits and a holy heart in the matter of redemption—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," says God. Blessed truth! Glad tidings, indeed, to sinners! for, since God chooses his people, not because they are holy, but to make them so, who may not be chosen? who should not hope? To my eye hope, in that truth, bends her bright bow on life's blackest cloud, and sends a beam of light streaming down into the guiltiest heart.

II. In redemption the saved are not justified by themselves, but by God.

This is no recondite truth—one which we need to dig or dive for. The pearl lies in the dark depths of the sea, but gold commonly lies near the surface of the earth. Like the precious ore gleaming from the naked rock, this truth shines on the face of my text; a child's eye can catch it there, and a child's mind comprehend it.

For how is a sinner made clean? but through the application of what is here called clean water; and by whom, according to the text, is that water applied? It is applied *to* the sinner, but not *by* the sinner.

Elisha remained within his house, nor accompanied Naaman to the banks of Jordan. Directed by the prophet to wash, and—when pride was ready to revolt from so mean a remedy—persuaded by his servants that it were a foolish thing not to try so small a remedy for so great a cure, the Syrian descended into the water; and, going down a leper, rose at the seventh dip with a skin fresh as a new born child's. A type of salvation in one respect, that case is not so in another. It is not so in this that Naaman bathed himself:—the sinner does not. In salvation, as in the sacrament of baptism, there are two parties. The baptized and the baptizer are not one. Whether that ordinance be administered to infant or adult, the water is applied by another's hand: and, as no man baptizes, so no man saves himself, no man justifies himself, nor did any man ever sprinkle himself with that atoning blood, which we shall shew to be symbolized by this "clean water." The bloody baptism is administered by the same hand which kindled the sun, and sustains the universe. To God, as Author and Finisher of our Faith, the whole glory of salvation belongs; for, observe how he says in my text—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

Job enquires, "How should man be just with God?" A great question—one in which we have the deepest interest—one which the Gospel was revealed, and the

cross of Calvary was raised to answer—and one to which our own merits and works furnish no satisfactory solution. It is natural, most natural, for us to trust in these. I do not deny it. Observe what happens when at sea the cry rises—"A man overboard!" With others you rush to the side of the vessel; with beating heart you watch the place where the rising air-bells and boiling deep tell that he has gone down. After some moments of breathless anxiety, you see his head emerge from the wave. Now, that man is no swimmer—he has never learned to breast the billows; yet, with the first breath he draws, he begins to beat the water; with violent efforts he attempts to shake off the grasp of death, and, by the play of limbs and arms, to keep his head from sinking. These struggles may but exhaust his strength, and sink him all the sooner; nevertheless, that drowning wretch makes instinctive and convulsive efforts to save himself. So, when first brought to feel and cry, "I perish"—when the horrible conviction rushes into the soul that we are lost, when we feel ourselves going down beneath a load of guilt into the depths of the wrath of God, our first effort is to save ourselves. Like a drowning man, who clutches at straws and twigs, we seize on anything, however worthless, that promises salvation. Thus, alas! many toil and spend weary, painful, unprofitable days in attempting to establish a righteousness of their own, and to find in the deeds of the law protection from its curse.

There was a time, no doubt, when man held his fortunes in his own hand; but that time is gone. Our

power passed away with our purity. Impotence has followed the loss of innocence, and we have nothing now left us but a wretched pride. Amid the changes which this world presents, I have seen a man who had known better days—who had been nursed in luxury, and reared in the lap of fulness—outlive his good fortune, and sink into the baseness and meanness of the deepest poverty. It seems to be in such a case with men as with plants. Naturalists say that it is much more difficult to teach a mountain plant to accommodate itself to a low locality, than to get one, which by birth belongs to the valleys, to live and thrive at a lofty elevation. So, there seems nothing more difficult to men than to descend gracefully. How few, who have been accustomed to a high position in society are able to reconcile themselves to a humble one? And thus, I have seen such an one as I have described, when he had lost his wealth, retain in his vanity what he should first have parted with, and continue proud in spirit even when he had become poor in circumstances. So is it with us in our low and lost estate. Spiritually poor, we are spiritually proud—saying, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” while we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Even when we are in some degree sensible of our poverty, and know we cannot pay, we are yet, like the unjust steward, ashamed to beg. Indulging a pride that assorts ill with our rags, we will not stoop to stand at God’s door, poor mendicants, who ask for mercy. We shall work out our own salvation—nor be beholden to another. Nor, sometimes, if

not always, till the sinner learns, by prolonged, and painful, and unsuccessful trials, that he cannot be his own saviour, does this proud heart allow us to stand suppliants at the gate of Mercy—our plea for pardon not our own merits—nothing, nothing whatever but Jesus' merits and our own misery. Yet thus and there we must stand if we would be saved. Jesus is a saviour of none but the lost.

Now, to bring us down to this conviction, and to draw from our lips and hearts the cry, "Lord, save me, I perish," God often leaves those whom he calls to try their hand at working out their own salvation, and of the rubbish and untempered mortar of their own works and vows to build up a righteousness of their own. They toil and labour at the Babel tower—a tower to reach to heaven. It rises imposingly. It grows lofty. It looks strong. But some day conscience awakens, and there follows an earthquake of the soul which shakes the fabric to its foundation; or some sudden gust of temptation strikes it, and the labour of years is laid in ruins upon the ground. This ruin proves their redemption: for—first step in a right direction—they at last come to feel, that, notwithstanding their most strenuous efforts to live holily, holy they are not, holy they cannot be.

God deals with them as Jesus did on Galilee with Simon Peter. Impetuous, self-satisfied, puffed up with vanity, Peter will walk the sea to parade his power and prove his superiority to the other disciples. His master lets him try it. He bids him come; not that he may drown Simon, but drown Simon's pride. Boldly he ventures on the water. He begins to walk; but, alarmed at

his new position as he rises and falls with the swell of the waves, he begins to fear, and, like a cause which is lost for want of courage, he begins to sink—lower and lower still he sinks, till the cold water rises to his heart, and kisses his drowning lip. Painful but profitable lesson! His danger and failure have taught him his weakness. Terror masters shame, and, stretching out his arms to Christ, he cries, “Lord save me, I perish.” Now, to such a state, and such a confession, all who are to be saved must first be brought. “I perish,” is a saving word. “I perish,” like the cry of the child in the natal chamber, is the first sign of life, the first utterance of a new existence. He who raises his eyes to heaven to cry, “I perish,” “Lord, save me, I perish,” has planted his foot on the first round of the ladder that raises man from earth to heaven. Have you got your foot there? conscience stricken and pale with terror, have you ever cried, “Lord, save me, I perish?”

This confession and this petition will, sooner or later, rise to God from every man, who, under the enlightening and awakening influence of divine grace, is intelligently, seriously, resolutely, bent on salvation. We say so, because no man ever yet tried to live without sinning, and succeeded. Who that ever tried it has not failed?—Who has not found, that it were as easy for a man of mortal mould and weight to walk the water, as to walk this world one day without sin? Oh, has not He who is angry with the wicked every day, reason to be angry every day with the best of us? “In many things we offend.”

Imagine not by vows, and engagements, and promises, and resolutions, entered into, in your own strength, to restrain the corruption of your nature—to bind the limbs of the “old man.” That “old man” is ever young. To him age brings no infirmities. He grows in vigour with increase of years. Vulnerable to no weapon but the “Sword of the Spirit,” and, intrenched within your heart, he is immortal till you pierce him there. This terrible “old man” laughs at thy strongest bonds, and snaps them on his giant arms, as Samson in the days of old the green withes of the Philistines.

Time is precious. You waste it in attempting to work out a righteousness of your own. In you so engaged, I see a negro, black and tawny, seated by a running stream, a laughing-stock to some, an object of pity to others, who labours and toils to wash himself white, and remove the dark pigment of his skin. Rise up, throw soap and nitre into the stream, and, turning your back on these, go, seek the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Are you busy and painstaking in the attempt to work out a righteousness of your own? Leave that loom. Gossamer threads! are not your vows and promises ever snapping in your hand, and breaking at each throw of the shuttle? The robe of righteousness was never woven there. The raiment meet for thy soul, and approved of by God, was wrought upon the cross; there, with colour more enduring than Tyrian purple, it was dyed red in the blood of the Son of God.

Come away, then, and come to Jesus. Come as you

are. There is neither time nor need for delay. Imagine not that you have such preparation to make as Joseph had before he was ushered into Pharaoh's presence. The Hebrew prisoner is lying immured in a foul and lonely dungeon, when to a thundering at the gate and the cry of "a message from the palace!" the ponderous bolts are drawn. The door is thrown open, and, guided by the jailer, the royal messengers hurry along the dreary passages and enter Joseph's cell. Pale, sad, disconsolate, far from his father, and a father's love, a slave, a captive, neglected in dress and person, the Hebrew lies before them. They strike the fetters from his limbs, they hurry him off, for the King with royal impatience frets and grieves till his dream is read; and yet with all their haste Joseph is not ushered into Pharaoh's presence till the marks of the prison are removed, and in attire and appearance he is made like one who may be admitted into a palace, and stand before a king. We are told that "he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." But I have to tell the sinner that, although he pines in a deeper and more loathsome dungeon, although he is covered with fouler and filthier rags, and although the presence of Jesus is infinitely more august, and venerable, and exalted, than that of any mortal king, he stands in no need of preparatory holiness, of even one short hour's delay. You have neither to change a rag, nor wipe out a stain. Jesus is ready to receive you as you are. Come then as you are. Here, this hour, the bridegroom stands by the marriage altar. It is not

your wealth, nor rank, nor beauty which has won his heart. He loves you; he has shed his blood to wash you; at a great price he has purchased the wedding garment, a robe of righteousness, and the crown of glory. The romance which relates how a low-born maid was united to a prince, the turn in fortune's fated wheel which gave the honours of a queen to a foreign slave, these but dimly shadow what thy fate might be. Why, when Christ seeks you, should you hang back? He is ready to espouse you to himself in the marriage bonds of an eternal covenant—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

MAN JUSTIFIED THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 25.

THE feast was to prepare; the rooms were to be made ready, there were servants to direct, and guests to accommodate, there was the character of the house to maintain, and its whole machinery to keep oiled and in smooth working order—with these things Martha was busy. Not only busy, but, like many others, she was so occupied, so engrossed with household cares, that in a tone which had the sound of a gentle rebuke, our Lord said, “Martha, thou art cumbered about many things; but one thing is needful.” That observation applies as much to men as to women; more so, perhaps.

Furnished with clasping tendrils, and strong by the attachments which they form, the woodbine and ivy wind their pliant arms around the tree, embrace it closely, and rising to its lofty boughs, and clinging to its rough bark, they give ornament and beauty—a vesture of soft green spangled with flowers—in return for the support they get. Like these, woman—gentle, loving, confiding—is prone to attach herself to a nature stronger than her

own, and to lean on it for support. And whether it be that from this peculiar disposition she is less opposed to the faith which looks to another's righteousness and leans on another's strength, certain it is there is more religion among women than men. If, on account of the elevation and high position which it has given her in Christian countries, woman owes most to religion, religion in turn owes most to her. You tell me that "by woman came sin?" I know it; but I set off this against the fact—by woman came the Saviour. Jesus was a virgin's child; it was not, in a sense, by the son of man but woman that the serpent's head was crushed. More than that, in those days when he walked this world, women were his trustiest, kindest friends. Whoever betrayed, denied, deserted him—they never did. The nearest to his cross, and earliest at his sepulchre, they were faithful when all others were faithless, and gave early promise of that devotedness to his cause, which their sex in all ages have honourably and pre-eminently displayed. Go through our Christian households, and I will venture to say, that you shall find more women than men, more wives than husbands, more sisters than brothers who are living under the influence of true religion. Many more children have to refer their earliest, deepest, holiest impressions to a mother's than to a father's piety.

But, be we men or women, "One thing is needful." Yet how sad and strange it is, that this one needful thing, which, for that very reason, should be the most, is often the least sought after; which, for that very reason, should be the first, is often the last sought after; and

sometimes, alas! never sought after at all. It is the brightest feature in man's sad and sinful lot, that while amid the business and anxieties, and toils, and cares, and keen competitions of a world, which has so many blanks and so few prizes, there is, after all, but one thing needful. And especially blessed is it, that the only thing we really need is the only thing we are sure to get. Sought in sincerity, was it ever sought in vain? Other gifts may be asked and refused; but it is true of this as of nothing else whatever, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you."

The one thing needful is salvation—it must be *that*—can be nothing else than *that*. To a man, the conscious possessor of a never-dying soul, to a man who is burdened with a load of guilt, to a man who, in an eternity which he is nearing every hour, descries a throne of rigid and righteous judgment, oh, what has this wide world to offer comparable to salvation? What profit would it be to me though I gained it all, if I lost my soul? All those other things which we seek, all that we toil and travail for, all for which we daily fret and vex ourselves, nay, all for which some are fools enough to barter away their souls, compared to this are but mere spangles and tinsel, dross and dust—bubbles coloured with rainbow hues that break at a touch, and, bursting, smart the eyes of the children whose breath has blown them. When a man lies stretched out on a bed of death, ah, he sees objects then in their due proportions. From that point of view the highest points of earthly ambition, the loftiest pinnacles of

wealth, of power, of fame, dwindle down into littleness, and look as far beneath salvation as the peaks of the loftiest Alp beneath the sun. Yet, strange to tell—incredible, did we not know it to be true—many, as if there was neither God in heaven, nor fire in hell, nor soul in man, take no interest and feel no care about the matter. They live and die like beasts. Is it otherwise with you? Anxious about what alone is worth anxiety, are you pressing on the preacher the jailer's question, "Oh, sir, what shall I do to be saved?"

That great question—the greatest of all questions—is one which admits of a short and intelligible answer. Capable of a wide expansion, it can yet be brought within a very narrow compass. The river, which there flows between distant banks, and yonder spreads itself out into a lake, reflecting on its mirror-face the bright heavens above and the dark hills around, is here—where its foaming waters flash past, loud as thunder, and quick as lightning, or creep sullenly along at the bottom of the deep, dark gorge—brought within narrow bounds; bounds so narrow, that with nerve enough, by one brave leap from rock to rock, I could clear its breadth. Even so all the wide expanse of doctrines to be believed, and duties to be done, which might be expatiated over in reply to the question, What shall I do to be saved? is contracted, compressed, comprehended in the apostle's brief address, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." From the dust of six thousand years bring out the old covenant of Eden, and on that soiled and torn banner, you read the fading motto, "Do

and live." But what read we on the folds of the triumphant banner, which, defiant of hell and the world, waves on Mount Calvary, and under which believers, panoplied in the armour of God, march to crowns and victory? The eye of a sinner's hope hails and kindles at the sight of another and better motto; for there, inscribed in the blood of Jesus, like red letters on a snow-white ground, we read, "Believe and live." Thus as salvation is the one thing needful for man, faith is the one thing needful for salvation.

Like other things, however, that are one in the aggregate, this one thing consists of many parts. My hand, for instance, is one, yet it is furnished with five fingers. This body is one, yet it has many organs. The Nile or Ganges is one river, but one which is fed by many tributaries, and disgorge its waters into the sea by the channels of many mouths. A tree is one vegetable form, but one that has many roots below, and many branches above; and even so, to leave the other figures, and select the last, is that "Tree of Life," which has Christ for its root, and for its fruit holiness and heaven. I have seen a tree, after rising in a single stem, divide itself into two great boughs, which, afterwards divided and subdivided into innumerable branches, spread out their foliage to drink in the air and light, and dews and heat, of heaven. So is it with redemption. The subject presents itself to our eye under two grand divisions. First, the remission or pardon of sin; and secondly, the renovation of the soul. While salvation is the one thing needful, the two things needful to salvation

are sin pardoned and the soul renewed. For, suppose that your sins were pardoned, but that your heart remained in its corruption, the door of heaven remains shut ; because, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Then, again, although your hearts were renewed, unless your sins also were pardoned, that door stands shut ; because of the sentence, "The soul that sinneth shall die." The door of heaven, like that of some treasure-chest or gate of citadel, guarded with jealous care, is thus barred by two strong bolts. Both bolts must be drawn. Before we can enter into glory, we must be pardoned as well as renewed, and renewed as well as pardoned.

Leaving the renovation of the soul to be afterwards considered, I resume my observations on the pardon of sin, and justification of the sinner, as expressed and promised in these words : "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Having endeavoured to prove, first, that God's people are not chosen because they are holy, but that they may become so ; and, secondly, that man does not justify himself, but is justified by God, I now remark—

III. That we are not justified or cleansed from the guilt of sin through the administration or efficacy of any outward ordinance. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean."

Now, since the cleansing is accomplished through

the application of sprinkled water, surely, some may say, this refers to baptism. The element used in that ordinance is water, and the common method of using it is by sprinkling. And seeing that God says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean;" and by that, certainly, means that he will cleanse his people from sin; and seeing that he thus appears to connect the forgiveness of sin with the sprinkling of water, is there not something—if not much—in these words, favourable to the views of those who maintain that the due administration of baptism removes original sin, and confers on its recipients the grace of regeneration? No; nothing of the kind, as we shall prove.

Three hundred years ago, our church, with an open Bible on her banner, and this motto, "Search the Scriptures," on its scroll, marched out from the gates of Rome. Did they come clean out of Babylon? Experience shews, that it is much easier to leave our mother country than drop our mother tongue. Across the seas which they sail, and to the lands which they colonise, the emigrants carry their prejudices, passions, and even old-fashioned superstitions. They people the glens and valleys of the new world with the fairies that dance on the green, and the spectres that walk by night among the haunted ruins of the old country. So I fear that, on departing from the Church of Rome, we carried into our Protestantism—as was not unnatural—some of her ancient superstitions; just as our Scottish fathers carried into their practice some of her intolerant principles. We cannot approve of their intolerance,

yet it is but justice to the memory of these great men to add, that it admits of an apology. They had been suckled by the wolf, and it was no great wonder that, with the milk of the wolf, they should have imbibed something of her nature.

It is not the privilege and happiness of man to pass through his changes like the Saviour. When Jesus rose a conqueror from the grave, he left the dead-clothes behind him. But look at this apparition, from which sisters and friends shrink back. Some scream with terror; and all afraid to touch him, they leave Lazarus to stand in the dark mouth of his grave, till the word is given, "Loose him and let him go." He comes forth alive, but bound hand and foot; he leaves the sepulchre, but with his grave-clothes on. And prone, as we of Scotland are, to boast that our fathers, with Knox at their head, came forth from Rome with less of her old superstitions about them than most other churches, to what else than some lingering remains of Popery can we ascribe the painful anxiety which some parents shew to have baptism administered to a dying child? Does not this look very like a rag of the old faith? It smells of the sepulchre.

Summoned once, and in haste, to the dying bed of a mother, who was anxious to see her child baptized ere she herself expired, I found that with her I could sympathise. The last act of life—the last effort of her sinking heart—was to give the infant to God. With her dying arms she laid the new-born lamb on the Shepherd's bosom, and, ere the water was sprinkled by our

hands on its face, the mother had breathed her last. Unconscious of the affecting scene, the sleeping infant received a double baptism; at once baptized by the water that fell from our agitated hand, and by the big bitter tears that rolled down on its sweet face from a father's cheeks. There was sorrow and anguish there; beside that dead mother deep solemnity, but no superstition; and, if there was a mother's weakness in the wish, it was one which we felt it no sin to sympathise with. But sympathise with those we cannot, who, when death has stamped his seal upon an infant brow, hurry off for a minister to baptize the dying. I cannot believe that water holds any virtue to save a soul. I recoil with horror from the thought that a God of mercy would suspend salvation on a mere outward ordinance. Is there not reason to suspect that at the root of this anxious and unnecessary haste, there lies some lurking feeling that baptism—if not absolutely essential—is at least very serviceable to salvation, and has some connection, near or remote, with regeneration and the remission of sins?

Now, with all respect and due regard to the feelings of others, so far as they are conscientious, we cannot look upon such notions as else than the vestiges of an old superstition. We acknowledge no authority in these matters but the word of God. And there I can see no foundation for the idea, that baptism and salvation—baptism and regeneration—are necessarily linked together, or are in any respect inseparably connected. Were it so, baptism were the highest, holiest ordi-

nance in the universe of God. Had it been so, surely it is not reasonable to suppose that our Lord would have left a rite of such transcendant importance to be administered in every case by inferiors—by the hands of his servants. Were baptism identified with regeneration and the “new creature,” would the Apostle Paul, who gloried in preaching, have spoken of it as an inferior ordinance? He declared with manifest satisfaction that he had not been sent to baptize but to preach; and, leaving the administration of the rite to his inferiors, he even thanked God that he had baptized none of them. Besides, do the cases, for instance, of Simon Magus and the Ethiopian lend any sanction to this theory of baptismal power? Assuredly not.

Look at Simon Magus! He was baptized by apostolic hands; and in his case the ordinance, beyond all doubt and controversy, was duly administered. Do his conduct and bearing warrant us to believe that his sins were pardoned or his heart renewed? By no means. On the contrary, this man is declared, on apostolic authority—by the voice of Simon Peter himself, to be still “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Shocked to find a baptized man, offering with money to buy the Holy Ghost, Peter, bursting with indignation, said, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,

for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely it is much more reasonable to believe that Simon Magus, although baptized, was not regenerated, than to believe that an inspired apostle would speak in such terms of a regenerate man. What evidence did he give of regeneration? How could he be regenerate when we hear high heaven itself pronouncing him by the lips of its inspired messenger to be still "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity?"

Look next at the Ethiopian eunuch. Was he not *baptized* and *regenerate*? True; but observe that that order should be reversed; he was *regenerate* and *baptized*—regenerate before he was baptized—not born again in his baptism, but born again before it. Why did Philip baptize him? He granted him baptism, because he believed with all his heart. But how can a man believe until he is renewed! In other words, can a dead man move, or cry, or wish, or walk? The stifled shriek, this awful sound within the coffin, these struggles to force up the lid and throw off the cerements, prove that the dead is alive—that he has passed "from death to life." And did not the Ethiopian give proof of spiritual life previous to his baptism? Ere he had left the chariot, ere his feet had been dipped in the stream, ere one drop of its water had fallen on his bended head, the Spirit of the living God had manifestly fallen on his heart. Hear the narrative:—"And, as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart,

thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." These cases are altogether irreconcilable with the notion that baptism has any necessary connection with the forgiveness of sin, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. They evidently prove that baptism and regeneration do not, and cannot stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. Otherwise, the case of the Ethiopian were an illustration of what the world never saw, and never shall see—would be an example of what were a contradiction and an absurdity—of something far more wonderful than a miracle—of such an impossibility as a son older than his father, or as a thunder-peal that preceded the flash in which it originated—of, in short, an effect in the order of time preceding its own cause.

Besides, does not the sad and melancholy history of thousands prove that the outward ordinance is often administered without any corresponding administration of renewing grace? The altar and the offering are there, but no fire descends from heaven on the sacrifice. Grant that in our case, and in that of any other such church as ours, the cause of the failure is to be found in our lack of apostolic succession; grant that in our case the water, if not actually polluted by unconsecrated hands, is deprived of all virtue by the channel through which it flows; grant that we have no commission to baptize, and that therefore what we do in such holy offices is null and void; grant the relevancy of all these allegations (each and all of which we deny)—is it not an undeniable and melancholy fact, that the lives of persons in

all churches—even of the most transcendental in their claims—demonstrate that many are baptized with water who have never been baptized with the Holy Ghost. The question, therefore, that we would urge on your most serious consideration, does not concern the sign, but the thing signified. If you have got the living element, I care little, or, rather, nothing, through what church, or by what channel it may flow. Have you got the grace of God? In the words of an apostle, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost?”

IV. We are justified, or cleansed from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission ;” and none, we may add, without its application.

Where do we find this doctrine in the text? By what process of spiritual chemistry can this truth be extracted from it? There is water, and clean water, and sprinkling of water, it may be said, but no word of blood; there is neither sign nor spot of blood upon the page. True; so it looks at first sight; but without the hand of Moses we shall see this water turned into blood, impossible, though it be, without his rod to repeat the miracle of Egypt. This at least is plain, that here, as elsewhere, water is but the sign of spiritual blessings. And a most expressive symbol we shall find it, if we but reflect on the important part that this element plays in the economy of nature. It covers more than two-thirds of the entire globe; it is universally diffused

through the ambient air ; by the clouds it forms it tempers the force of a fiery sun ; it drapes the heavens with curtains of the most gorgeous colours, dyed in the rosy tints of morn or in evening's golden hues ; and it fills the floating reservoirs of the sky, to descend, when burst by lightning, or breaking by their own weight, in refreshing showers on the thirsty ground. The circulation of this fluid is to the world what that of blood is to the body, or that of grace to the soul. It is its life. Withdraw it, and all that lives would expire ; forests, fields, beasts, man himself would die. This world would be one vast grave ; for water constitutes as much the life as the beauty of the landscape ; and it is true both in a spiritual and in an earthly sense, that the world lives because heaven weeps over it. It was Christ's choicest figure of himself. Turning on his own person the eyes of thousands, as on a perennial fountain—one never sealed by winter's frost, nor dried by summer suns—free, full, patent to all, he stood up on the last and great day of the feast, and cried, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” Thus in the hope that some of you are thirsting for eternal life thus let me say Jesus now addresses us. Would to God, he were as precious to us as is water in the sight of him who is perishing of thirst ! With bloodshot eyes, a throat black as coal, his speechless tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth, the desert reeling round him, oh ! what will the traveller not give for one cup of water ? Fill it with water, he will give it back to you filled, twice, ten times over with gold. Would to God that our thirst for Jesus Christ were

as ardent; that He were all our salvation, and all our desire.

The property of water, however, to which reference is made here, is one different from any of these. It is not the property by which it sustains or revives life, yet it is one for which this element is as well known, and as universally used. All the world wash with water, as well as drink water; and the reference here is to that solvent power, by virtue of which it dissolves impurities—turning white what is black, and cleansing whatever is foul. It stands here, therefore, the figure of that which cleanses. The object to be cleansed is the soul; the defilement to be cleansed away is sin; and we now therefore address ourselves to the all-important question—Of what is this water the figure? The key to the question lies in the epithet *clean* water. Let us examine and analyse this water. It is not water in the state in which it descends from the skies, or flows in our rivers, or may be drawn from a common well; for, observe, it is not said, then will I sprinkle water, but “*clean* water on you, and ye shall be clean.” The water is such as the Jews understood by *clean* water—not free from impurity, and in itself clean, but that maketh clean—in the words of the ceremonial law, “water of purifying.” This was prepared according to a divinely appointed ritual. Look how it was prepared, and you shall see it reddening and changing into blood.

Gathering the lowing herds from their different pastures, they sought up and down among them, till a red heifer was found—red from horn to hoof, and mottled

by no other colour—one all red, and upon whose free neck yoke of bondage had never lain. Separated from the herd, accompanied by the people, she is led by priestly procession outside the camp; and there, struck by a mortal blow, she falls under the hands of the priest. As the blood gushes to the knife, he catches it in his hand, and seven times casts the crimson shower towards the tabernacle. So soon as the victim is dead, it is heaved on the burning pile, and while the smoke of the sacrifice floats away to heaven, horn and hoof, skin, flesh, and bone, are all reduced to ashes. These, being carefully collected, are mixed with pure water in a pure vessel—and that water is the *clean* water of my text. See now how plainly—when understood aright—this expression refers to a vicarious sacrifice, and the merits of an atoning death. What was that heifer? Spotless and separated from the common herd, she is a type of Him who was without spot or blemish, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. With neck on which yoke had never lain, she is a type of Him, who said, “The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me.” Red in colour, she is a type of Him, whose feet were dipped in the blood of his enemies, and who, as seen by the prophet on his way from Bozrah, was “red in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his might.” And what is this public procession, which conducts the heifer without the camp, but a figure of the march to Calvary? And what is her bloody death, but a type of that which Jesus suffered amid the agonies of the cross? And what are these fires that burn so fiercely, and consume the

victim, but a flaming image of the wrath of God, under which his soul was "withered like grass?" And what was the water mingled with this heifer's ashes, but a type of the righteousness, which, imputed by God, received by faith, and applied to sinners, makes sinners just? For, as the Jew over whom that water was sprinkled became ceremonially clean, so the guilt of original and actual sin—all guilt is removed from him (much the happier man), whom God sprinkles with the blood of Jesus—and to whom sovereign mercy imputes a Saviour's merits.

Let me further illustrate this. There was another method of preparing this *clean* water, which, although in some respects different, was the same in this, that it also implied the death of a vicarious sacrifice. The leper, a moving mass of sores, a banished man—expelled from city, synagogue, the dwellings of men, and the house of God—the victim of a disease, which by its loathsomeness, made his presence an offence to others, and his life a burden to himself, was a hideous, doleful, revolting emblem of a sinner. Now let us see how—when God was pleased to cure him—his ceremonial uncleanness was removed. On the happy occasion, which was to restore him to the arms of his wife, the sweet society of his children, the brotherhood of men, and the presence of God—two living birds were taken. They must be doves or turtles—the gentlest of all God's creatures, and therefore the more fitting emblems of his Son. They are held over a vessel already filled with running water. One bird is slain. The blood, as it

flows over the plumage of the fluttering victim, falls into the water; and that, dyed by the crimson stream, now becomes "water of purifying"—the clean water of the text. With this sacred lavation the priest sprinkles the man who had been a leper, and now ceremonially clean, that blessed moment he is folded in the embrace of his wife; he kisses his children; he walks with them a most joyful man, at the head of a happy family, into the house of God.

But there were two birds. We have seen one disposed of. What has become of the other? With beating heart it remains a prisoner in the hands of the priest; and the close of this ceremonial offers us a beautiful and most vivid picture of the removal of guilt. The living bird, type of a sinner to whom a Saviour's merits are to be imputed, is dipped head, feet, wings, and feathers—plunged overhead—into the blood-dyed water. It is "baptized unto death." And, brought out before the people—all crimsoned with blood—the priest opens his consecrated hand, and restores the captive to liberty. Image of a pardoned one on his path to glory, it spreads out its wings, and, beating the air with rapid and rejoicing strokes, with "wings of silver, and feathers of yellow gold," it flies away to its forest home.

You will now understand the nature of this clean water; and cannot fail, I think, to see, that although robed in a Jewish dress, justification by faith in the righteousness of Jesus—that paramount article of our creed which Luther called the test of a falling or standing church—is the doctrine of my text. Thus understood, it sheds, we think, a valuable light on one of the

best known, and not least important passages in the Word of God. When Nicodemus, not yet prepared to confess Christ before the world, muffled himself up in his cloak, and, stealing along the silent streets under the cloud of night, sought an interview with our Lord, Jesus said to him—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," adding, by way of explanation, the no less memorable words—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." According to the common understanding of these words, they refer only to the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is generally thought that the water there is but an emblem of the Spirit, and that our Lord just meant to say—Except a man's soul is purified by the Spirit's regenerating influence, as his body is by water, he cannot be a recipient of grace, and an heir of heaven.

We venture to think, that on that occasion, our Lord preached the Gospel more fully. Turn the light of my text upon these words, read them in connection with it, understand by the water of Christ's address that of my text, and his language to Nicodemus expands into a fuller Gospel. If the water in his address meant only the Holy Spirit, he told the truth, but not the whole truth. Are not more than regenerating influences needed, that a man may enter the kingdom of heaven? For that end is not the blood of the Saviour as necessary as the renewing of the Holy Ghost? Now let our Lord, in addressing Nicodemus—who as a Jew would at once catch the allusion—have an eye to the *clean*

water of the ceremonial law; let the water there refer, like that here, to an atoning sacrifice, and from that celebrated passage the Gospel shines forth in its effulgent radiance. Our Lord tells this ruler what I preach, and pray you to ponder on, that except you are washed in his blood, as well as renewed by his Spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

The doctrine of the text, and, indeed, of all Scripture is, that nothing saves but blood. In that, as in other senses, "the life is in the blood." There may be sprinkling of water, but without the shedding and sprinkling of blood there is no remission—no remission, though the water fall from the holiest hand, and be itself the purest that ever dripped from mossy well or gushed from mountain rock. What has its fountain in those upper heavens, of which the visible firmament is but the starry floor, is that, which takes away sin. It is not the tears that fall from weeping heavens but those that fell from Jesus' eyes; it is not the rain that drops from dissolving clouds, but the blood that dropped from a wounded Saviour; it is not what falls when lightnings flash, and thunders roll along shaking skies, but what fell when the sword of justice was flashed in his dying eye, and the law pealed its loudest thunders on his bleeding head—it is that which brings peace and pardon to a guilty soul, and fills to the brim this crimson fountain, which is open for all uncleanness.

"I," not my ordinances, not baptism, nor the supper, nor preaching, nor prayer, not these, but "I," says Jesus, "am the way." Not *a* way, but *the* way. There is

but one way. Yet, let me warn you, that although there be but one way of getting to heaven, there are two ways of missing it; and—strange as at first it seems—these go off in opposite directions; the one to this side, and the other to that. As one man travelling due westward, and another due eastward, at the same rate of so many miles a day, would meet again face to face in that part of the globe which lies directly beneath our feet, the travellers by the two opposite paths I speak of meet again—meet in perdition. Now, God blessing and enabling you to believe it—this doctrine of salvation by the blood and righteousness of Christ will guard you against both errors—on this side against presumption, and on that against despair. Some—and of these the Pharisee is a type—believe that they are not sinners; or, if sinners, that God is not angry with them, and will not punish them. What an exposure of this delusion is that cross! The Son of God dies there; and unless he dies, your sin is not forgiven. Others—and of these Iscariot is the type—turning away from God, believe that he is so angry with them that he will not pardon. They look on him as a stern, austere, vindictive, and implacable Divinity; in whose bosom the hatred of sin, like a roaring whirlpool, has swallowed up all other feelings—in whom the love, kindness, and pity of the father is lost in the sternness of the judge. And so—nor any wonder when this is their gloomy creed—they shun God, they hate God, they try to shut him out from their thoughts, they wish—how vain the wish!—that there were no God at all. But where, let me ask, do they find this implacable

God? If I ascend into heaven, he is not there; there Jehovah sits enthroned, the father of a happy family—like an effulgent sun, pouring gladness and glory upon all. I return to this earth—go up and down the world—seek him, but he is not here; I cannot find a trace or footprint of him here. Images of the true God, I see his sun shining without distinction on the evil and the good, and his rain falling with the same affluent abundance on the fields of the just and the unjust. Fields, forests, mountains, smiling valleys, and sunny seas, are not more full of creatures than of happiness; and from the deep bass of ocean to the ringing carol of the lark, nature forms one choir, and chants her hymns to God. I open the Bible, but he is not here. Gift of our heavenly Father, dying legacy of an incarnate Son, revelation of a kind and winning Spirit! love shines on thy every page, and in thy very name thy generous mercy is proclaimed—Gospel, glad tidings, good tidings of good. Of this God, this appalling spectre, armed to destroy, whom Despair eyes with dark, and hating, and horrid scowl, Heaven says, he is not in me; Earth says, he is not in me; the Bible says, he is not in me.

Where is he, then? With head averted, hair standing on end, and stony horror in her looks, Despair points to the pit, saying—look there! What have you to say to that? In the first place, I have certainly not to say that that hell is but the dream which haunts a guilty conscience—nor yet to deny that there is a hell. No: nor, further, to conceal it although I could. It were no kindness with a green covering to hide the pit; that is

the cunning hunter's business ; and the business of him who hunts the world for souls and plants snares in every footpath. It is an awful thought, that pit ; it is an awful reality, that pit ; it is an awful abode, that pit ; and this is an awful declaration, "The wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the nations that fear not God." But over against these stern declarations, and between the pit and you, a high red cross is standing. Mercy descends from heaven, alights upon its summit, and preaches hope to despair, pardon to guilt, salvation to the lost. Free as the winds that fan her cheek, free as the sunbeams that shine on her golden tresses, she invites all to come, opens her arms to embrace the world, and in a voice that rings like a silver trumpet, cries, "O, Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the word of the Lord." A beautiful vision ! Her eye, so pitiful, swims in tears as she looks on sinners, and, not willing that any should perish, she bids you read on that cross, where they are written, not in letters of gold, but blood, these blessed words, this greatest oath :—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." As *I live*, says God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. By my shame and sorrow, by my cross and agony, by this thorny crown and bloody tree, as *I die*, says Jesus, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And, Holy Spirit ! Dove of heaven ! hovering over us, staying, lingering, refusing to be driven away, thou also sayest, as *I warn, plead, entreat, implore*, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

MAN CONVERTED.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ;
and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will
give you an heart of flesh.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 26.

IT is a happy thing that baptism is not the door of heaven. Otherwise it had been unhappy for millions, who, dying in earliest infancy, never undergo that rite—never pass that way. Dying unbaptized, we hold that they die not on that account unsaved ; for whoever dare hang God's mercy on any outward rite, we do not, and although we believe that this interesting ordinance is also, when engaged in with faith, an eminently blessed one, we dare not. Thousands go to heaven without baptism. Thousands, alas ! perish with it. Heaven is greatly made up of little children—sweet buds that have never blown, or which death has plucked from a mother's bosom to lay on his own cold breast, just when they were expanding, flower-like, from the sheath, and opening their engaging beauties in the budding time and spring of life. “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” How soothing these words by the cradle of a dying infant? They fall like balm drops on our bleeding heart, when we watch the ebbing of that young life, as wave after wave breaks feebler,

and the sinking breath gets lower and lower, till with a gentle sigh, and a passing quiver of the lip, our sweet child leaves its body lying like an angel asleep, and ascends to the beatitudes of heaven and the bosom of its God. Perhaps God does with his heavenly garden as we do with our own. He may chiefly stock it from nurseries, and select for transplanting what is yet in its young and tender age—flowers before they have bloomed, and trees ere they begin to bear.

In the words of the Westminster Catechism, “Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s.” Baptism attaches us to the visible church; admits to *that*, and is its door of entrance; but, while this ordinance unites to the body of professing believers, no more than the sacrament of the supper does it of necessity form a living attachment between us and the Saviour. Let us see what is done in these ordinances.

Years ago a man stood up in the house of God, and in his arms there lay a sleeping child. Dipping his hand into a laver, the minister sprinkled some drops on the infant’s face, and over the unconscious creature pronounced the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That child was you. By hands, now mouldering in the grave, your father then tied you—so to speak—to Christ. Well, time rolls on, and infants grow into children, children shoot up into youths, and youths change into bearded

men ; and then there comes another day. A table is spread in the house of God. Like the white shroud in which kind women swathed his body, a linen cloth covers the memorials of Christ's death. The sacred symbols are uncovered ; the commemoration begins ; and, amid the stillness of that solemn scene, with thoughtful countenance, a man leaves his seat, and taking the bread, and raising the wine cup in his hand, he dedicates himself to the Saviour. That man again is you. And now awake, not asleep, conscious of what is done, not passive but active now, with your own hands you have cast another knot upon the cord by which your father years ago bound you to Jesus. You are now tied—doubly tied—yet it does not follow that you are engrafted into him.

I have seen a branch man had bound to the bleeding tree, that, being engrafted into its wounded side, both might thus be one. Yet no incorporation followed ; there was no living union. Spring came singing, and with her fingers opened all the buds ; summer came, with her dewy nights and sunny days, and brought out all the flowers ; brown autumn came to shake the trees and reap the fields, and with music and dances and mirth to hold “harvest home ;” but that unhappy branch bore no fruit, nor flower, nor even leaf. Just held on by dead clay and rotting cords it stuck to the living tree—a withered and unsightly thing. And so alas ! is it with many ; “having a name to live they are dead.” They have no faith ; they want that bond of living union between the graft and what it is grafted on—

between the sinner and the Saviour. And therefore, in quitting this part of our subject for another, let me ask, "believest thou;" and if thou dost not, oh, let me urge you to pray with the man in the Gospel, "Lord help mine unbelief?"

Do you say, I cannot believe? In one sense, that is true; in another, it is not. It is not true in the same sense as it is true—that a man who has no eyes in his head—nothing but empty sockets—cannot see. All men, in fact, are born with faith. Faith is as natural to a man as grief, or love, or anger. One of the earliest flowers that springs up in the soul—it smiles on a mother in the infant's cradle; and living on through the rudest storms of life, it never dies till the hour of death. On the face of a child which, left for a little time with strangers, has been caressed with their kisses, and courted with their smiles, and fondled and dandled in their arms, I have seen a cloud gathering, and growing darker, till at length it burst in cries of terror and a shower of tears. The mother returns; and when the babe holds out its little arms to her, in these I see the arms of faith; and when, like a believer restored to the bosom of his God, it is nestling in a mother's embrace, and the cloud passes from its brow, and its tears are changed into smiles, and its terror into calm serenity, we behold the play and power of faith. This is one of its earliest, and—so far as nature is concerned—one of its most beautiful developments. So natural, indeed, is it for us to confide, and trust, and believe, that a child believes whatever it is told, until experience shakes its confidence in human

veracity. Its eye is caught by the beauty of some flower, or it gazes up with wonder on the starry heavens;—with that inquisitiveness which in childhood, active as a bee, is ever on the wing, it is curious to know who made them. Now it would believe you if you said you made them yourself. Such is the faith which nature gives it in a father, that it never doubts his word. It believes all he says, and is content to believe where it is not able to comprehend. For this, as well as other reasons, our Lord presented a child as the living model of a Christian. He left Abraham, father of the faithful, to his repose in heaven; he left Samuel, undisturbed, to enjoy the quiet rest of his grave; he allowed Moses and Elias, after their brief visit, to leave the earth, and wing their way back to glory. For a pattern of faith, he took a boy from his mother's side, and, setting him up, in his gentle, blushing, shrinking modesty, before the great assembly, he said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein."

While Paul said, "When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things," neither he nor any other man ever thought of leaving the faith of childhood with its rattle and its toys. Faith is, in fact, the very life and soul of friendship. What is a friend, but one whom I can trust, one who, I believe, will in sorrow's hour mingle his tears with mine, one on whose support I reckon when my back is at the wall? Without faith in each other's friendship, kindness, and honesty, this

world would be turned into a Bedouin desert ; men would become Ishmaelites ; my hand against every man, and every man's hand against me. Faith is the marriage-ring ; the guardian angel of conjugal felicity ; the jewelled zone that binds society together ; the power, mightier than steam, or wind, or water, that moves all the wheels of commerce. Unless man could trust his fellow-man, business would come to a dead stand ; the whole machinery of the world were stopped ; our busy streets would bear crops of grass ; and, though winds blew and tides flowed as before, rotting ships would fall to pieces in our silent and deserted harbours.

Leaving the crowded city for rural scenes, or setting your foot on board ship, and pushing out upon the heaving ocean, you find faith ploughing the fields of both—faith in the laws of nature, in the ordinances of Providence. When the air has still a frosty breath, and, although cleared of winter snow, the earth is cold and—looking dead as a corpse but disrobed of its shroud—it shews neither flower nor leaf, nor sign of life, the husbandman, notwithstanding, yokes his team and drives the bright ploughshare through its breast. With confidence in his step, liberality in his hand, and hope in his eye, he scatters the seed far and wide on the bosom of the ground. He is a believer ; a believer in Providence—in the laws and procession of the seasons. He has faith ; not saving faith indeed, but still true faith. He believes that out of these frosty skies gentle zephyrs shall blow, and soft showers shall fall, and summer beams shall shine ; and, looking along the vista of time, he sees golden corn waving thick

upon these empty fields, and hears in this silent scene the joy of light hearts ringing in the laugh and song of the reapers. His ploughing and his sowing are acts of genuine faith; and, as he strides across the field with his sowing sheet around him, he is an example of one, who, with his eye, as well as his foot, on earth, "Walks by faith, not by sight."

Then, again, sailing as much as sowing is an act of faith. In this rough and weather-beaten mariner, on board whose ship we are dashing through the gloom of a starless night, and over the waves of a pathless ocean, I see faith standing at the helm. That man has faith in the needle. Believing that the heart of an angel is not more true to God than this needle to the north, he presses forward over the watery waste in a voyage, that may with perfect truth be called a voyage of faith. Would to God we had as strong a faith in the Bible! Would to God that our trembling hearts pointed as true to Jesus, as his needle in all weathers, and on all seas, to the distant pole! What we want divine grace to do, is not so much to give us faith, as to give to the principle or faculty of faith, which we have by nature, a right, holy, heavenward direction; to convert it into faith in things eternal. The faith that sees the unseen—a faith just as strong in the revelations of the Bible as in the ordinary laws of nature, this is what we need. Let it be sought in earnest, persevering prayer. It is "the gift of God;" for saving faith has God for its author, and the Spirit for its agent, as well as Christ for its object, grace for its root, holiness for its fruit, and

heaven for its reward. Accepting the righteousness of Jesus Christ, it makes us just; and seeing every sin pardoned, all guilt removed, God smiling, and heaven opening to receive us, faith is the spring of a peace of mind which is worth more than the wealth of worlds—which passeth all understanding. May God help us to the confession and the prayer, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

We have already stated that while salvation was the one thing needful, there were two things needful for salvation. Having considered the first of these, namely, the remission of sin and justification of the sinner, we now enter upon the second, namely, the renovation of the soul as enunciated in the words, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” And we remark—

I. This is a great change. Not that all men think so. Once on a time, for instance, we wandered into a church in this city. It was the Socinian chapel. The preacher read these words for his text, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And just as at the fords of Jordan, they knew a man’s country by the way he sounded Shibboleth, so you can never fail to know a man’s creed by the way in which he handles such a passage as that. The preacher read his text; and then, as it were, sat down by the cradle, where his charge was sleeping, to rock them over into a deeper slumber. The text, forsooth, was an oriental figure! a hyperbole!—

pointing to an outward change. No more was needed. In the strong and highly figurative language which eastern nations are accustomed to employ, it described the change undergone by a man who has abandoned a wild and wicked life for habits of decency, honesty, and temperance. Far be it from me to speak lightly of temperance societies, or of any scheme whatever, that aims at the dignity and elevation of man ; yet, according to the preacher, our Lord's language meant nothing more than the change which these institutions are of themselves able to accomplish—a change of habits without any gracious change of heart. Did a drunkard become sober? he was born again ; a libertine pure? or thief honest? or liar true? he was born again ! In short, such was the style and character of the discourse, that if a poor hungry soul had gone there for bread, he got nothing—carried away nothing—but a stone. Instead of a fish, there was the serpent's coil, the sound of her deadly hiss. Believe the preacher, and these words were applicable only to the scum and off-scourings of the city—the dregs of society—those poor, depraved, degraded creatures, who, weighed down by a load of poverty and ignorance, and guilt, have sunk to the bottom, and to our shame, are left to lie there in distressing and dreadful pollution. So far as any congregation of decent, well dressed, sober, honest, reputable professors of religion were concerned, the saying had no reference to them ; our Lord—although he assuredly found in Nicodemus one of this class—did not speak of them ; they, happy mortals! had no need to be born again.

You cannot fancy any two things more opposed than that doctrine and ours. We believe that the purest, the gentlest, the loveliest, most amiable creature that blesses fond parents, and one of nature's fairest flowers, adorns earth's happiest home, stands as much in need of becoming a new creature as the vilest outcast who walks these streets—the lost one, whose name is never mentioned but in broken hearted and wrestling prayers to God. The best of mankind are so bad that all have need to be born again; so bad, that the change promised in the text, and insisted on by our Saviour, cannot be a surface of superficial matter—a mere defilement of the skin which nitre and soap may remove. Words have lost their meaning unless this change is a radical reform—a change great in its character, and lasting in its consequences—a change, which, affecting not the habits only but the heart, both reaches downward into the deepest recesses of the soul, and stretches forward into the ages of eternity.

Now, I am afraid that some—dreaming that they have been born again, and so are safe, because their conduct is changed, and because, so far as their mere habits are concerned, they are better than once they were—have gone to sleep before this work is ever begun. In a matter of such momentous importance, beware of rash conclusions. Have we not seen the passions, like the fire upon the hearth, burn out and die for want of fuel? Have we not seen the course of vice, like a worn-out machine, stop from the decays of nature, from the mere wear and tear of its materials? And since virtue is cheap,

while vice is costly,—levying a heavy tax upon the purse—destructive of health, and damaging to character, have we not seen self-interest turn a man from the indulgence of his strongest passions? Then, old age cools hot blood. Successive bereavements will in a way break the heart, and some deep disappointment may wean those, who have the keenest appetite for its pleasures, from the gaieties and vanities of the world. And, as in Roman Catholic countries, many a cowed monk, and many a veiled nun, enters monastery or convent more under the influence of disappointment than devotion; so, when hopes are blasted, and pride is mortified, and ambition has lost the game, you may get sick of the world. Alas! all who bid adieu to the ball-room and theatre, and giddy round of fashion, do not leave the circle of her enchantments for the closet, the sanctuary, the fields of Christian benevolence. As by sleight of hand and necromantic trick Egypt's magicians produced a set of mimic miracles, that were clever counterfeits of those which God wrought by the hand of Moses, may not other causes than true love of holiness or godly hatred of sin work such an outward, as bears some cunning likeness to a saving change? In matters of religion, beware of confounding an *almost* with an *altogether* Christian. So far as it goes, any change for the better is good. We hail it with hope. It is good so far as it goes, and good so long as it lasts; but oh, let us not fall into the fatal mistake of confounding an outward reformation with that divine, inward, eternal transformation which is wrought by the Spirit, and promised in the words, “A new heart also will I give you.”

Leaving the nature of this change to be afterwards considered, let me attempt meanwhile to shew that it is a great change. In illustration of that truth, look, I pray you, to the symbols under which it is presented in the Word of God.

It is a birth.

So soon as an infant leaves the womb—that darksome dwelling, where it has passed the first stage of its existence—although the same, it may be said to be a new creature. It enters on a new being. How great the change from that living sepulchre, where it lay entombed, nor saw, nor heard, nor breathed, nor loved, nor feared, nor took any more interest than the dead in all that was happening around it! Alive, yet how like death its state has been. Having eyes it saw not, ears it heard not, feet it walked not, hands it handled not, affections it felt not. Its condition was a mysterious mingling of the characters of life and death. When the windows of its senses are thrown open, and streams of knowledge come rushing in on its young and wondering soul, and its eyes follow the light, and with these restless hands it is acquainting itself with the properties of matter, and sounds are entering its ears, amid whose mingled din it soon learns to distinguish the sweet tones of one tender voice—its mother’s, and it loves, and is loved, and lies nestling in dreamy slumbers on her bosom, or sweetly smiles in her smiling face—how great the change! Now, just because the change wrought on the soul in conversion is also great, and introduces its subject into a new and delightful existence, it borrows a name from

that change. That is the first, this is the second birth; aye, and infinitely the better of the two. Better! because in that a son of man is born but for the grave, whereas in this a son of God is born for glory. Better! because the march of these little feet is along a rough path between a cradle and a coffin; whereas the way of grace, however full of trials, toil, and battle, is from the pangs of birth onward and upward to a crown in heaven. Happy for you if you are heaven-born, and heaven-bound. It may be that a stormy life is thy earthly destiny. Be of good courage. Let storms rage and tempests roar—however rude the gale or high the swelling billows—a heaven-born passenger in a heaven-bound bark, you cannot miss the haven. “There remaineth a rest to the people of God.”

This change is a resurrection. A resurrection is a great change. Go to the churchyard. Go to that lone home where thy dearest friends shall one day carry you, whether you will or not. “Come,” said the angels, “see the place where the Lord lay.” Come, let us see the place where we ourselves shall lie, and look at others as we ourselves shall be. Take man in any of his stages of decay. Look at this compressed line of mould, that by its colour marks itself out as different from the neighbouring clay. Black earth, retaining no apparent vestige of organization! what resemblance does it bear to a man? None. Yet gather it up and give it to the chemist; he analyses it, and pronounces this unctuous dust to have been once a human creature. It may have been a beauty, who saw with alarm the roses fading on

her cheek, and age tracing wrinkles on her ivory brow, and mixing in grey hairs amid her raven locks. It may have been a beggar, who, tired of a cold and hungry pilgrimage, laid his head gladly in the lap of mother earth, and ended his weary wanderings here. It may have been a king, who was dragged from amid his guards to the tomb, and sullenly yielded to the sway of a monarch mightier than himself. Or, look here at these yellow relics of mortality which the gravedigger—hardened by his trade—treats with such irreverent contempt. Look at these preachers of humility—at this mouldering skull, the deserted palace of a soul, within which high intellect once sat enthroned—at those fleshless cheeks, once wreathed with smiles, and blooming with roses—at that skeleton hand which may once have grasped the helm of public affairs, or swayed the passions of capricious multitudes, or held up the cross from sacred pulpits before the eyes of dying men—at those mouldering limbs, which piety may have bent to God—or at these hollow sockets—now the nest of slimy worms—where glances of love have melted and looks of fire have flashed.

Turning away your head with horror and humiliation, to think that you shall lie where they are—and be as they are—you say, Alas : what a change is there ! Ah, but Christian Faith steps forward, and plants a triumphant foot on the black grave's edge. Silencing my fears, dispelling my gloom, reconciling me to that lowly bed, she lifts her cheerful voice, exclaiming, True ! but what a change shall be there ! Looking through her eyes,

I see the spell broken. I see that dust once more animate. And when the blast of the trumpet—penetrating the caves of the rocks, rending the marble tomb, and felt down in the depths of ocean—pierces the ear of death in this dark, and cold, and lonely bed, where I have lowered a coffin, and left the dear form and sweet face of some loved one, I see mortality rising in form immortal, more beautiful than love ever fancied, or poet sang. How great the change, when these mouldering bones, which children look at with fear, and grown men with solemn sadness, shall rise instinct with life! Think of this handful of brown dust springing up into a form like that on which Adam gazed with mute astonishment, when first he caught his own image mirrored in a glassy pool of Paradise; in a form such as, when awakening from his slumber, he saw with wondering, admiring eyes, in the lovely woman that lay beside him on their bed of love and roses. And now, because the change which conversion works on the soul is also inexpressibly great, it borrows a name from that mighty change; that, a resurrection of the body from the grave, this, a resurrection of the soul from sin. In this also we “pass from death to life”—in this are “created anew in Jesus Christ.” “We rise with him,” says the Apostle, “to newness of life.”

The greatness of the change is set forth in the symbolical representation of it in the next chapter. Seized by the hand of the Spirit, Ezekiel is borne aloft, carried away through the air, and set down in a lonely valley among the hills of a distant land. At some former

period, it appears to have been the scene of a great battle. There hosts had sustained the charge of hosts, and crowns perhaps were staked and won. The peace of these solitudes had been rudely broken by the shrieks of the wounded, the wild shouts of the victors, the clash of arms, and the savage roar of battle. It was silent now. But the tide that swept over it had left it strewn with wrecks. The dead had mouldered unburied where they fell; the skull rattled in the cloven helmet; the sword of the warrior lay rusting beside his skeleton, and the handle was still in the relaxed grasp of the bony fingers. On these unsepulchred corpses the "birds of the air had summered," and "the wild beasts of the field had wintered." The rain had washed, and the sun had bleached the bones which the ravens had picked bare;—they were white and dry. In these grim and ghastly skeletons a doleful picture of death lay stretched out before the prophet; and in all the scene which he surveyed there was neither sign nor sound of life, but, it may be, the croak of the raven, or the howl of the famished wolf, or the echo of his own solitary footfall. Here Ezekiel was standing, a lonely man, amid the mouldering dead, when a voice made him start. It came from the skies, charged with the strange question, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

We stay not to relate all that was said and done. It serves our purpose to say, that after the prophet had preached to the bones, he prayed to Him who—to dead bones, dead bodies, dead hearts, dead souls, dead families, and dead churches—is "the Resur-

rection and the Life." Ezekiel's was the prayer of faith—and, as always happens, it had its answer. How encouraging to us, when on our knees, that answer ! We feel as if Aaron and Hur sat by our side, and held up our weary arms. After preaching, the prophet prayed, and then there came from heaven a living, life-giving breath. It blows down the valley ; and as in passing it kisses the icy lips of the dead, and stirs their hair, and fans their cheek, man after man springs to his feet, until the field which Ezekiel found covered with ghastly skeletons is crowded with a mighty army—all armed for battle and war—the marshalled host of God.

Verily that was a great change ; but not less so the work of grace in conversion. While the prophet is gazing with astonished eye on this martial array, where, amid trumpet echoes, spears are gleaming, and plumes are dancing, as, bold in aspect and stout for war, the serried ranks march on, mark what the Lord said ;—“ Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel ; behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost.” Now, is not this the very judgment—the identical sentence—which the sinner often pronounces on his own case so soon as his eyes are opened, and he sees himself lost and undone ? What is the house of Israel here, but a type of God's chosen people ? What do we see in Israel here, but our condition by nature ; a state of death ; a state in which we are “ dead in trespasses and sins.” On this account Satan would have us yield to despair. It is he, who says that for such sinners there is no help—no hope. It is his voice which speaks in

the complaint, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost." The father of lies, the enemy of souls! listen not to him. Nor yielding even to a doubt,—for here "he that doubteth is damned"—but mark God's gracious answer to such dark, querulous, desponding words—"Thus saith the Lord God; behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and I will put my spirit within you, and ye shall live."

Hereafter we shall enter particularly into the nature of this great change; meanwhile let me ask, Have you any experience of it? I neither ask when, nor where, nor how you felt its first impressions. On these subjects the experience of saints is very different. Some can tell the time—giving day and date, the hour, the providence, the place, the text, the preacher, and all the memorable and ever interesting circumstances associated with their conversion. They can shew the arrow, which, shot from some bow drawn at a venture, pierced the joints of their armour, and quivered in their heart. They can shew the pebble from the brook, that, slung it may be, by a youthful hand, but directed of God, was buried in the forehead of their giant sin. They can shew the word that penetrated their soul, and—in some truths of Scripture—the salve that healed the sore, the balm that staunched the blood, the bandage that Christ's own kind hand wrapped on the bleeding wound. Able to trace the steps and relate the whole progress of their conversion, they can say with David, "come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

It is not so, however, with all, or, perhaps, with most. Some, so to speak, are still-born; they were unconscious of their change; nor knew when or how it happened; for a while at least, they gave hardly a sign of life. And thus with many the dawn of grace is in more respects than one, like the dawn of day. We turn our face to the eastward, and our back to the setting stars, to note the moment of the birth of morning; yet how hard it is to tell when and where the first faint, cold steel-grey gleam appears. And it is with many in regard to their spiritual dawn,—with the breaking of an eternal day,—with their first emotions of desire, and of alarm, as with that faint and feeble streak, which brightened, and widened, and spread, till it blazed into a brilliant sky.

The chief matter, about which to be anxious, is not the time, nor place, nor mode of the change, but the fact itself. Has this change taken place in you? Are you other than once you were? Rather than be what once you were, would you cease to be? Would you prefer annihilation to your old corruption? Some alas! changing to the worse, give themselves up to sins, which once they would have blushed to mention. Breaking loose from the innocence of their childhood, casting off the comely habits and pious practices of a paternal home, dead to all sense of shame, they rush into excess of riot; and, borne on by the impetus they have acquired in the descent, like one running down hill who would but cannot stop, when they reach the mouth of the pit they are borne over into perdition.

They change, but like “seducers,” they “wax worse and worse.” The night grows darker and darker; the edge of conscience duller and duller; the process of petrification goes on within, till the heart has acquired the hardness of stone. Wallowing now in the mire of the lowest sensuality, they can actually boast of sins, regarding which, on the day when they left a father’s roof, with his blessing on their head, and a mother’s warm tears on their cheek, they would have said with feelings of indignant abhorrence—“Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing.” What a melancholy change.

In beautiful contrast to a metamorphosis so sad and shocking, has the change in you taken an opposite direction? Can you say, I am not what once I was—I am better, godlier, holier! Happy are you! Happy, although, afraid of presumption, and in the timid modesty of a spiritual childhood, you can venture no further than one who was urged to say whether she had been converted? How humble, yet how satisfactory her reply! That, she answered, I cannot—that I dare not say; but there is a change somewhere; I am changed, or the world is changed. If you can say so, it is well. Such an answer leaves no room for painful doubts. Our little child—watching with curious eye the apparent motion of objects—calls out in ecstasy, and bids us see how hedge and house are flying past our carriage. You know it is not these that move; nor the fixed and firm shore, with its trees and fields, and boats at anchor, and harbours and headlands, that is gliding by the cabin windows.

That is an illusion of the eye. The motion is not in them but us. And if the world is growing less in your eye, it shews that you are retreating from it, rising above it, and, upborne in the arms of grace, are ascending to a higher region ; and if the fashion of this world, to our eye, seems passing away, it is because we ourselves are passing—passing and pressing on in the way to heaven. Sin never changes. If what once seemed lovely looks loathsome now—if what was once desired is detested now—if what was once sought we now shun and shrink from, it is not because sin is changed, but—blessed be God, and praise be to his grace—we are changed. Our eyes are opened ; the scales have dropt from them ; and the solution of the problem is found in the blind man's answer—"Whereas I was blind, now I see."

THE HEART OF STONE.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 26.

THERE is a mine of sound sense in the adage of an old divine, “seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the most efficient physic, and a good conscience the very best estate.” Early habits of self-restraint, total abstinence from all excess, diligence in business, attention to our duties, and that tranquillity of mind which piety brings, and which they enjoy who are at peace with God—these, we confidently affirm, would do more to abate disease than all our physicians, much more to feed the hungry and clothe the naked than our poor laws and charitable institutions, and very much more than any Acts of Parliament to promote the comforts of the people and preserve the liberties of the commonwealth. The older we grow, and the more our observation enlarges, the deeper grows our conviction that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

One of the most remarkable instances of this truth, which it was ever our good fortune to see, presented itself

in the vicinity of this house of God. A weary day had passed in visiting a wretched neighbourhood. Its scenes were sad, sickening, repulsive. Famine, fever, want, squalid nakedness, moral and physical impurities, drunkenness, death, and the devil were all reigning there. Those only who have known the sinking of heart which the miseries of such scenes produce—especially when aggravated by a close and tainted atmosphere—can imagine the grateful surprise with which, on opening a door, we stepped into a comfortable apartment. Its whitewashed walls were hung round with prints; the household furniture shone like a looking-glass; and a bright fire was dancing merrily over a clean hearth-stone. It was an oasis in the desert. And we well remember, ere question was asked or answered, of saying to ourselves, “Surely the fear of God is in this place; this must be the house of a church-going family.” It proved to be so; yet it was a home where squalid poverty might have been excused. A blind man dwelt there. And carrying away with us a lively sense of the temporal advantages of piety, we felt inclined to chalk these words on the blind man’s door as a lesson to his godless neighbours—“The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”

Suppose—and we suppose nothing impossible, nor in coming days improbable, for the promise waits fulfilment, “a nation shall be born in a day”—suppose, then, that in the plenitude of his grace, God should bend an eye of pity on the wretched inhabitants of our immediate neighbourhood, and pour down his Spirit in the affluence

of Pentecostal showers. At present, with a few happy exceptions, they are the votaries, and victims of dissipation—I say votaries and victims, because vice is such a damning thing, that he who begins by ministering at her altar always ends by becoming the sacrifice. Around us live thousands who never enter a house of God. Their children, unless they have the good fortune to die early, are reared in ignorance, vice, and crime; while of the adult population many are reduced by habits of intemperance to pinching hunger, and a squalid wretchedness, ill-relieved by the uncertain supplies of charity. Now, suppose that God were pleased to send life to these “dry bones”—suppose that from lip to lip, and house to house, the cry were passing, “Oh, sirs, what shall I do to be saved?”—suppose that the last shilling which vice had left them were spent in the purchase of a Bible, and that, like water by men parched in the desert and dying of thirst, God’s word were bought, borrowed, or begged—suppose that, rising to the summons of the Sabbath bell, these streets—where only a solitary worshipper may now be seen—were crowded with the unaccustomed spectacle of a ragged congregation pouring into the house of God;—how soon would their common aspect change? A few weeks, and we should hardly recognise them.

Save these picturesque and old-fashioned tenements, the blue heavens above, that rocky citadel with its frowning batteries, yonder noble arm of the sea, and the same green fields, rich valleys, and romantic crags of the everlasting hills around us, all old things else would have passed away. Prisons, that now complain of crowded

cells, would be found too large ; and many churches, cold now with empty pews, would be found too small. The smouldering fever, like an unfed fire, would go out for want of fuel ; and rank churchyards would grow green at Christmas, for lack of their too frequent burials. The brutal features of dissipation would give place to an expression of intelligence and humanity ; roses would blow on childhood's pallid cheek, and mother's smiles would chase the sadness from many a poor, sallow, infant face. Under the patronage of religion, and the sign of the Bible, the craft of the honest mechanic, and the trade of the useful merchant would flourish, while the panderer to vice would fall into unpitied bankruptcy, and the voice of a sober people would tell him to shut shop and begone. Furniture would crowd these empty rooms ; the rags, through whose loopholes poverty stared out upon an un pitying world, would change into decent attire. Piety, descending like an angel from the skies, would visit these dwellings with a prophet's blessing ; beneath her celestial feet, happiness would spring up like summer flowers ; plenty would pour her full horn into the lap of poverty ; meal would be found in every household barrel, and oil in every widow's cruse. Underneath the virtuous, benign, and heavenly influences of religion, this wilderness would be glad ; our city Ishmaelites would change into Israelites ; and these moral deserts would rejoice and blossom like the rose. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus ; come quickly."

The truth is, the world's great want is the want of religion. Perhaps men want more equal laws, more

liberal institutions, and through their happy influence, better and more stable governments. The greatest want of nations, however, is, that without which liberty has no solid pedestal to stand on—a genuine, mass-pervading piety. To drop all reference to foreign countries, I am sure that he who attempts to cure our social maladies, independently of this best and most sanatory element, may be a philanthropist, but is not a philosopher. We had almost said he is a fool. He is a fantastic schemer, who has set himself to make bricks without straw, and heal the waters of Jericho without the prophet's salt. His theories are as baseless and unsolid as if they conceived of man as a creature without a soul—of the solar system as without its central sun—of the universe without its God. Religion is the mortar that binds society together; the pedestal of liberty; the very backbone of the social system. But while the poor man may support, and be assured that if he leave his family no inheritance save his prayers and the priceless legacy of a godly example, he leaves them rich indeed,—while an education of domestic piety is better than all Greek and Roman lore,—and while godliness is the most stable basis on which to erect an earthly fortune,—I pray you to observe that the change promised in the text does not necessarily imply any temporal advantage—any improvement either in our bodily condition or worldly circumstances. We live in a world of mysteries. We sometimes see religion languishing neglected on a bed of sickness; and, in other cases than that of Lazarus, piety may be found clad

in rags and covered with sores, sitting a beggar at the rich man's gate. The change is on the man within. It affects the tenant, not the tenement; the soul, not the body; our circumstances, not so much in this life as in the life to come. If by faith in Christ you come to God, I cannot promise for him that he will pour luxuries into your cup, health into your veins, or money into your purse. But he will endow you with better, infinitely better gifts. Hear his promise in the text—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Having already illustrated the greatness of this change, I now proceed to examine its nature; and remark—

I. The old heart is taken away, and a new one put in its place.

The head was justly considered by the ancients to be the residence of the intellectual faculties, where the soul, presiding over all, sat enthroned, as in a palace. On the other hand, they regarded the affections as having their home in the heart—that other great organ of our system. Within the breast, love and hatred, grief and joy, aversion and desire, generosity, jealousy, pity, revenge, were supposed to dwell; and thus (to dismiss the metaphor), that substitution of one heart for another which is promised in the text, just implies an entire change in the character and current of our affec-

tions. Now, a change may be simply a reform, or, extending deeper and taking a wider range, it may pass into a revolution. Conversion is not a mere reform. No. If aught was ever worthy of the name, it is a revolution—a spiritual, mighty revolution—one greater than the tomes of profane history or any old monuments of stone or of brass record. It changes the heart, the habits, the eternal destiny of an immortal being. On the banner borne in triumph at the head of this movement, I read the words which doom all old things to ruin, “Overturn, Overturn, Overturn.” In place of the old mischievous laws which it repeals, it introduces a new code of statutes. Changing the laws, it changes the reigning dynasty, wrenches the sceptre from a usurper’s hand, and, banishing him forth of the kingdom, in restoring the throne to God, restores it to its rightful monarch.

The Gospel is in the highest sense revolutionary;—there can be no doubt of the fact. The old charge brought against its preachers is quite true. “These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.” But the world requires to be turned upside down. Like a boat capsized by a sudden squall, and floating keel uppermost in the sea, with men clinging to it and drowning around it, the world has been turned upside down already. To be set right, it must just be turned upside down again. If the order which God established has been reversed by sin—if in our hearts and habits time has usurped the place of eternity—the body of the soul—earth of heaven, and self of God;—

if that is first which should be last, and that last which should be first—if that is uppermost which should be undermost, and that undermost which should be uppermost, then things must be turned “upside down ;” and happy the homes and the hearts of which, in reference to the entrance of God’s Word, of the Holy Spirit, of converting grace, it can be said, “*These* that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.”

Where, it may be asked, lies any absolute necessity for a change so pervadingly elementary, so radical, so revolutionary? such an inward and total change? To discover that necessity we must search in the records of a distant past. It lies in an old event—in the Fall. By reason of that great crime and most sad disaster, the condition of our hearts, in reference at least to spiritual objects and interests, has become naturally so bad as not to admit of repair. We understand how this may be averred of a house. The tenement has fallen into such utter decay, so many cracks gape in its bulged and tottering walls, the timbers are so moth-eaten, the foundations so shaken, post, pillar, and lintel so mouldered away, that nothing remains but to pull it down level with the ground, and on its old site to erect a new and stately edifice. Or—to vary the illustration—a watch, which has slipped through careless fingers, and crashed on the pavement, may be so shattered that its works are damaged beyond repair. It passes the skill of the most accomplished mechanic to mend them. He must clear out the shell, take away the old works, and substi-

tute new machinery. In that case, although wheels, axles, levers, move within the old casements, the watch, in point of fact, is new; even so, when converted, although the man suffers no loss of personal identity, he who gets a new heart becomes, in a sense, a new man: to use the Apostle's words, "He is, in Christ, a new creature."

It is no doubt true that many, and some very serious injuries admit of repair. A steady, honest, industrious, enterprising merchant may repair a bankrupt fortune; a sagacious statesman may solder a broken crown; a physician may patch up a shattered and worn-out constitution; even some Mary Magdalene, returning to the paths of virtue, may repair that most fragile of all things—a woman's character; and, with time and God's grace given me, I would undertake to heal a broken heart. In the divine government we see the most remarkable provision made for the reparation of those injuries to which his creatures are exposed. The bark grows on the peeled surface of an old elm or oak, so as in time to obliterate the letters that friendship or doting love has carved. From the lips of the gaping wound a liquid flesh is poured, which, receiving nerves and blood-vessels into its substance, solidifies, and at length fills up the breach. From its shattered surfaces, the broken limb discharges a fluid bone—a living cement—which, growing solid, restores the continuity of the shaft, and gives the sufferer a leg or arm, strong as before. In some of the lower animals, indeed, this power is equal to the task, not only of repairing a broken, but of even restor-

ing a lost member. With such renovating energy has God endowed them, that, if by accident or otherwise, the writhing worm, for example, is divided, the headless portion not only survives such a formidable lesion, but, strange to see! produces and puts on a new head; offering us an example of animal life, which besides being fortified against the most formidable injuries, is actually multiplied by division. "How marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!"

Now while there are many striking and very interesting analogies between grace and nature, there is no analogy between these cases and the case before us. So far as man's natural and inherent powers are concerned, his heart sustained an irreparable injury by the fall. Sin is that deadly disease which our constitution has no power to throw off; and which no human skill can remove. The preacher is here assisted by none of that "healing power of nature" which in the sick chamber is the physician's best ally. Not only so, but God himself—with whom in a sense all things are possible, and to whom nothing is too hard—does not attempt its repair. In the work of conversion, it is not an old heart which is to be mended, but a new one which is to be given. In any attempt to patch up the old garment, the new cloth is lost, and the rent gapes but wider. Be assured that heaven is wiser than waste her costly wine on old, frail, musty bottles. The truth is, man does not admit of being repaired; and the more we become acquainted with our hearts, the more ready shall we be to describe their desperate and deplorable

condition in the words of holy Scripture—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The first thing, therefore, which you, who are seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, have need to seek, is what God has promised in the text, and David pleads for in this prayer—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Let me press this truth upon your thoughtful attention. May God impress it upon your hearts! It is a truth of the highest importance. To be sensible of our need of a new spirit, to feel that this old heart will not mend nor make better, is, in fact, the first step in salvation; and the deeper our impression of the reality of this truth, the more diligently shall we labour, and the more earnest shall be our prayers to be renewed day by day. Such an impression will secure our cordial assent to the memorable saying, with which one of England's greatest men, her bravest and noblest spirits, closed an illustrious career on the scaffold of an ungrateful country. As Sir Walter Raleigh laid his head upon the block, he was asked by the executioner, whether it lay right. Whereupon, with the calmness of a hero, and the faith of a Christian, he returned an answer—the power of which all of us shall feel, when our head is tossing and turning on death's uneasy pillow—"It matters little, my friend, how the head lies, provided the heart is right."

Now, as the view of the old heart, given in my text, is eminently calculated, with the divine blessing, to shew us how much we need a new one, let us consider—

II. The view which our text gives of the natural heart.

It is a heart of stone. "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh." We shall best understand the meaning and appreciate the power of this figure, by considering, in a popular point of view, some of the characteristic properties of a stone.

A stone is cold. Coldness, indeed, is characteristic of a stone. Hence, the lapidary, using his tongue to test the temperature, can, by that simple means, tell whether the seeming jewel is paste, or a real gem. Hence, also, when our eye has been deceived by the skill of the artist, the sense of touch has informed us, that what seemed marble was only painted wood. It is a common saying, "As cold as a stone." But what stone so cold as that which sin has lodged in man's breast? Cold is the bed of the houseless, who lies stretched on the wintry pavement, cold the cell within whose dank stone walls the shivering prisoner is immured; but colder far by nature this heart of ours in its affections to God and Christ. We are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. He is not the object of our love, nor do we make any return to Jesus for his warm and matchless affection. Blessed Lord! he had many a cold lodging on this ungrateful earth; his couch was oft the open field, where his locks were wet with the dews of night; drenched with the spray of the sea, and the lashing rain, his weary frame found sleep on the hard benches of a fisher's boat; yet on these he lay not on so cold a bed as he would find in

the dark, dreary chambers of an unrenewed heart. Sin has quenched a fire that once burned bright and holy there, and nothing now is left on that chill hearth, but embers and ashes—cold as death. “The carnal mind is *enmity* against God ; is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

A stone is hard. Fire melts wax, but not stone ; water softens clay, but not stone ; a hammer bends the stubborn iron, but not stone. Stone resists these ; and, emblem of a heart crushed, but unsanctified by affliction, it may be broken into fragments, or ground to powder, yet its atoms are as hard as ever. This is illustrated in the practice of the arts ; it is with the dust of diamonds that the diamond is cut. We have stood on a sea rock, when every billow, swung on by the tempest, broke against it with the roar of artillery, and shot up a shower of snowy spray ; we have looked to the crag, on whose bald brows the storm was bursting ; and have wondered how these, for so many thousand years, had braved the war and wear of elements. There is more cause to be surprised at what a man’s heart will stand. He sits in the church under a series of affecting sermons,—or a succession of affecting and afflicting providences like great sea waves break over him ; and he is unshaken, at least unaltered ; to all but divine grace unalterable. He *can* be saved ; but he only can be saved, because there is nothing impossible to God. Sitting there, so cold and hard, he reminds us of a mountain crag, cut by nature’s fantastic hand into the features of a human face, which looks out with stony eye upon the gathering

tempest, prepared, as it has already weathered a thousand storms, to weather a thousand more.

The man who remains unmoved under a ministry of mercy, who is insensible at once to the most appalling and appealing lessons of providence, who fears no more than a rock the thunders that peal and lightnings that play round his brow, and feels no more than a rock the influences that fall like summer sunbeams from the face and cross of Jesus, is manifestly beyond all human power. I would despair of his salvation, but for the omnipotence and benevolence of God; and, because I know that he, who of the stones of the street could raise up children to Abraham, can turn that heart of stone into a heart of flesh. What need here of the Spirit of God! Oh! there is in unconverted men an obstinacy, an obduracy, a strength of resistance, an impenetrability to impression, before which man, however anxious to save, is utterly powerless. And in dealing with such a case, we seem to hear the voice of God addressing us in his words to Job—"Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose, or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Wilt thou take him for a servant? Wilt thou play with him as a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? His scales are his pride; joined one to another they stick together that they cannot be sundered. His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold; the spear,

the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment; he maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. His heart is as firm as a stone, yea as hard as a piece of the nether mill-stone."

A stone is dead. It has no vitality, no feeling, no power of motion. It lies where it is laid. The tomb-stone above and the dead body in its grave below undergo no change, other than that both, by a slower or speedier decay, are mouldering into dust. Enter that hall of nobles and see how the marble forms of departed statesmen look down unmoved upon scenes where once they played a distinguished part, and stand, alike unmoved, whether their policy be reviled or praised. Look at this statue—however skilful the sculptor's imitation—there is no life here; no speech breaks from these mute lips; the limbs seem instinct with power, yet they never leave their pedestal; no fire flashes in these dull grey eyes, nor passions burn within that stony breast; the stone is deaf, and dumb, and dead. In grief's wild and frantic outbursts affection may indeed address the form of one deeply loved, and for ever lamented. Speak to it, it returns no answer; weep over it, it sheds no tears; image of a lost and loved one, it feels not the grief that itself can move. Now, how many sit in the house of God as unmoved? Careless as spectators who have no concern in what takes place before them, they

take no interest in anything that was done on Calvary! And is it not sad to think that more tears are shed in playhouses than in churches; and how by those who call themselves Christians, the new novel is sought more eagerly, and devoured more greedily than the New Testament? What a deplorable account of the human heart! One would think it is of stones, and yet it is of living men, too like, alas! to many of ourselves—these words are spoken—"Having eyes, they see not; having ears, they hear not; neither do they understand."

We have described a stone as cold, hard, dead. And is this, some may ask, a just and correct picture of the human heart? The question is a fair one, and deserves a frank answer. Now, I should hinder a cause I desire to help, and do injustice to the truth of God, were I to answer that question by simply affirming, that the picture is a true portrait of the natural heart in respect of all its sentiments and emotions. Human nature is bad enough, and there is no need to exaggerate its evils. In one sense, they do not admit of exaggeration. But, if we dared, instead of exaggerating, we should be happy to excuse them, and render to our mother nature the kind and filial office of casting a cloak upon her shame.

We know as well as others do, and would ever remember, that although man be dead to gracious affections, until sin has had "its perfect work," he is not dead to many tender and lovely emotions of nature. Many beauties are lingering about this ruin—the engaging, but melancholy vestiges of its former glory. We

freely admit, that, so far as regards father and mother, wife and children, brother and sister, and the beloved friends of our social circles, an unrenewed heart may be the warm nest of kindest affections. There can be no doubt, I think, that the Christian will prove the best father, the best husband, the best wife, the best master, the best servant, the best citizen, the truest, trustiest, friend. Nay, for their pith and truth, notwithstanding their homeliness, I will venture to quote the words of Rowland Hill, who said, "I would give nothing for the Christianity of a man whose very dog and cat were not the better of his religion." Still, it is no treason against the Gospel to believe, that one, as yet unhappily a stranger to the grace of God, may be endowed with many most pleasant and lovely virtues.

Away among the rough moors, by the banks of tumbling river, or the skirts of green wood, or on sloping acclivity, or steep hill side, we have gathered, remote from gardens and the care of men, bunches of wild flowers, which, although very perishing, were exquisitely beautiful, and steeped in fragrant odours; and such as these are some men and women, who have never yet been transplanted into a state of grace. There is no sin in loving them. In the young ruler who declined to take up his cross and follow Christ, was not there so much that was amiable, gentle, attractive, that Jesus' heart was drawn to him? It is said that he "loved him:" and the emotions of a Saviour's bosom cannot be wrong in mine. Nor is his a rare phenomenon—a solitary case. We have seen men who made no great

profession of religion, who certainly were not pious, and yet so kind, tender, affectionate, generous, large hearted, and open handed, that it was impossible not to love them. Nature never asked our permission. Whether we would or would not, we felt drawn to them, as our Lord to the amiable youth who refused to follow him. And as we have rooted up from the moor some wild flower to blow and shed its fragrance in a sweeter than its native home, have we not longed to do the same with these fine specimens of the natural man? Transplanted by grace into the garden of the Lord, baptized with the dews of heaven, converted to the faith, they would be flowers fit to form a wreath for the brow that men wreathed with thorns. I am compelled to acknowledge, that I have known some, whom even charity could not reckon among true Christians, who, yet in point of natural virtues, put Christians to shame. In some beautiful traits of character they were more like Jesus than not a few of his real disciples.

Let there be no mistake, then. When I speak of the heart as a stone, I am looking at it as *it* looks on God, a Saviour, salvation, and eternity. However distressing it may be (and it is most distressing) to think that persons otherwise most lovely and of most loving hearts, are so cold and callous to the claims of Jesus, yet, so far as divine love to sinners, and so far as the kindnesses of saving mercy are concerned, I am convinced that among the rocks which beat back the roaring sea—up on the mountain peaks where dews, and rain, and bright sunbeams fall—down in earth's darkest and deepest

mines, there lies bedded no stone colder, harder, less impressible, more impenetrable, than an unrenewed heart. Does unbelief suggest the question, Why, then, preach to the unconverted? as well preach to tomb-stones? as well knock with thy hand upon a door which is locked on a coffin and a corpse? In a sense true; and altogether true, but for the promise—"Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." That promise is the soul of hope and the life of preaching. It forbids despair. And should recreant ministers, yielding to despair, hold their tongues, and pulpits all be silent, Christ still were preached. Strange evangelists would start up from our streets to break this awful silence; for did not our Lord, when required by an envious priesthood to silence the hosannahs of the multitude, turn on them and say, "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out?" Thus assured, not only of our children, of our people, of the dead womb of Sarah, but even of the very stones of the street, that "God can raise up children to Abraham," despair we cannot feel, and dumb we dare not be. He who shall raise the dead in churchyards can waken the dead in churches. Therefore we anticipate conversions; and in hope offer Christ to the chief of sinners, beseeching you, "Be ye reconciled to God."

THE NEW HEART.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ;
and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will
give you an heart of flesh.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 26.

AS in a machine where the parts all fit each other, and, bathed in oil, move without din or disorder, the most perfect harmony reigns throughout the kingdom of grace. Jesus Christ is the “wisdom,” as well as the “power” of God. This kingdom perplexes us with nothing corresponding to the anomalies and incongruities of the world without. There we sometimes see a noble title and exalted station disgraced by a man of low habits ; while others are doomed to an inferior condition, who would shine like gilded ornaments on the very pinnacles of society. The beautiful congruity of Christ’s kingdom is secured by those who are the objects of saving mercy being so renewed and sanctified that their nature is brought into harmony with their position. The man within corresponds to all without.

Observe how this property of *new* runs through the whole economy of grace. When Mercy first rose upon this world, she presented an attribute of divinity which was new to the eyes of men and angels. Again, the Saviour was born of a virgin ; and, again, he who

came forth from a womb where no child had been previously conceived, was sepulchred in a tomb where no man had been previously interred. The infant had a new birth-place, the Crucified had a new burial-place. Again, Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, the author of a new testament, the founder of a new faith. Again, the redeemed receive a new name; they sing a new song; their home is not the Old, but the New Jerusalem, where they shall for ever dwell on a new earth, and walk in glory beneath a new heaven. Now it were surely strange, when all things else are new, if they themselves were not to participate in this general renovation. Nor strange only, for such a change is indispensable. A new name without a new nature were an imposture. And it were not more an untruth to call a lion a lamb, or the rapacious vulture by the name of the gentle dove, than to give the title of sons of God to the seed of the venomous Serpent.

Then again, unless man received a new nature, how could he sing the new song? The raven, perched on the rock, where she whets her bloody beak, and with greedy eye watches the dying struggles of some unhappy lamb, cannot tune her croaking voice to the mellow music of a thrush; and, since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, how could a sinner take up the strain and sing the song of saints? Besides, unless a man were a new creature, he were out of place in the new creation. In circumstances neither adapted to his nature nor fitted to minister to his happiness, he would find himself in heaven as much out of his

element as a funny inhabitant of the deep, or a sightless burrower in the soil beside an eagle, soaring in the sky, or surveying her wide domain from the top of a mountain crag.

In the works of God I know nothing more beautiful than the perfect skill with which he suits his creatures to their condition. He gives wings to birds, fins to the fish, sails to the thistle-seed, a lamp to light the glow-worm, great roots to moor the cedar, and to the aspiring ivy her thousand hands to climb the wall. Nor is the wisdom so conspicuous in nature, less remarkable and adorable as exhibited in the kingdom of grace. He forms a holy people for a holy heaven—fits heaven for them, and them for heaven. And calling up his Son to prepare the celestial mansions for their tenants, and sending down his Spirit to prepare the tenants for their mansions, he thus establishes the most perfect harmony between the new creature and the new creation.

You cannot have two hearts beating in the same bosom, else you would be, not a man, but a monster. Therefore the very first thing to be done, in order to make things new, is just to take that which is old out of the way. And the taking away of the old heart is, after all, but a preparatory process. It is the means, but not the end. For—strange as it may at first sound—he is not religious who is without sin. A dead man is without sin; and he also is sinless, who lies buried in deep and dreamless slumber. Now God requires more than a negative religion. Piety, like fire, light, electricity, magnetism, is an active, not a passive ele-

ment; it has a positive, not merely a negative existence. For how is pure and undefiled religion defined? "Pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." And on whom does Jesus pronounce his beatitude? "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them." And what is the sum of practical piety—the most portable form in which you can put an answer to Saul's question, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" What but this "depart from evil, and do good." Therefore, while God promises to take the stony heart out of our flesh, he promises more. In taking away one heart, he undertakes to supply us with another; and to this further change in the process of redemption, I now proceed to turn your attention. And by way of general observation, I remark—

I. Our affections are engaged in religion.

An oak—not as it stands choked up, in the crowded wood, with room neither to spread nor breathe, but as it stands in the open field—swelling out below where it anchors its roots in the ground, and swelling out above where it stretches its arms into the air, presents us with the most perfect form of firmness, self-support, stout and sturdy independence. So perfectly formed, indeed, is the monarch of the forest to stand alone, and fight its own battle with the elements, that the architect of the Bell Rock Lighthouse is said to have borrowed the form of that tower from God. Copying

the work of a Divine Architect, he chose the trunk of the oak as the model of a building which was to stand the blast of the storm, and the swell of winter seas.

In striking contrast with this tree, there are plants—some of them of the gayest colours, richest perfume, and fairest beauty—such as the passion-flower, the ivy, the clematis, the woodbine, the splendid creepers of tropical forests, which cannot stand alone. They have neither pith nor fibre to maintain themselves erect.

Yet these are not doomed to the base fate of being trodden in the dust by the hoof of every passing beast, and having their beauty soiled in the mire. Types of one whom God has called by his grace, and beautified with salvation, who is strong in weakness, and rises to the highest honours of heaven, these plants may overtop the tallest oak, and, holding on by the everlasting rocks, they have laughed at the storm which laid his proud head in the dust. This strength they have, these honours they win, by help of their tendrils, and arms, those curious instruments of attachment with which God has kindly furnished them. These plants are thus formed to attach themselves to other objects. It is their nature to do so. If they get hold of one noble and lofty, they rise to the height of its nobility; if of a mean support—a rotten stake or shattered wall—they embrace the ruin, and, like a true friend, share its fate; and we have seen, when they had no other object on which to fix, how—like a selfish man, who is the object of his own affections, and has a heart no bigger than his coffin, just large enough to hold himself—they would embrace them—

selves, and lie basely on the ground locked in tangled embarrassment in their own arms.

It is with man as with these. What their tendrils are to them, our affections are to us. Ambition aims at independence; and men fancy, that when they have accumulated such or such a fortune, obtained such or such a position, arrived at such or such an age, they shall be independent. Independent! what folly! man was never made to be self-supporting, and self-satisfying. Even when his home was Eden, and he was blessed with the visits and enjoyed the full favours of a benignant God, the Lord said—"It is not good for man to be alone."

We are constituted with affections, of which we can no more divest ourselves than of our skin. Be the objects which we love noble or base, good or bad, holy or sinful, belonging to earth or to heaven, some object we must love. It were as easy for a man to live without breathing, as to live without loving. It is not more natural for fire to burn, or light to shine, than for man to love. And the commandment, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," had been utterly impracticable, unless taken in conjunction with the other precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind." It is with human hearts as with this plant which is creeping along the ground; to upbraid it for its baseness, to reproach it for the mean objects around which its tendrils are entwined, will never make it stiffen and stand erect; you cannot raise it unless you present some lofty object

to which it may cling. Or it is with our hearts as with vessels which can only be emptied of one element by substituting another in its place. And just as I can empty a vase filled with air or with oil by pouring water into it, because water is the heavier fluid, or as I can empty one of water by pouring quicksilver into it, because the specific gravity of mercury is greatly in excess of that of water, so, the only way to empty my heart of the world, and the love of the world, is by filling it with the love of God. This is the divine science of the Gospel. The Gospel, the scheme of redemption, is divinely accommodated to our nature. It has blessings for our gratitude, unseen objects of the grandest character for our faith, for our ambition a heavenly crown, sin for our hatred, God for our love, for our hopes the brightest prospects, for our fears the greatest terrors. Its light is adapted to our darkness; its mercy to our misery; its pardon to our guilt; its sanctification to our impurity; its comforts to our griefs; and in substituting the love of Christ for the love of sin, in giving us an object to love, it meets our original constitution, and satisfies the strongest cravings of our heart. It engages our affections, and, in taking away an old heart, supplies its place with a new one and a better.

II. Consider now the new heart—"A new heart also will I give you."

We have said enough in a preceding discourse to shew that we are not to look for evidence of the new

heart in the natural affections. Religion does not bestow these. We are born with them. We possess some of them in common with the brutes that perish ; and they may be seen flourishing in all their beauty in those who are utter strangers to the love of God. To them as to all things else, indeed, which are his gifts, sin is antagonistic and injurious. Let sin ripen, so as to have " its perfect work," and it eats like a cancer into man's best affections. It first indurates, then deadens, and at length destroys. Sinners are essentially, offensively, selfish ; and—as we see exemplified every day—the more men grow in sin, they grow the more heartless, and hesitate less to sacrifice the tenderest feelings and best interests of others to their own base and brutal gratifications. There is a picture in the book of Romans, painted by the hand of a master, which is more affecting and more appalling than any that her greatest artists have hung in the galleries of Rome. Here it is, a full-length portrait of sinners drawn by the hand of Paul, in these vivid and terrible colours :—" God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters ; inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." What a dark and dreadful picture of humanity. There see the monster into which fully developed sin turns the sweetest child. What an " evil

and abominable thing" is sin ! Like God, may we hate it with a perfect hatred !

Observe, that although the state of the natural affections does not furnish any certain evidence of conversion, it is the glory of piety that these are strengthened, elevated, sanctified by the change. The lover of God will be the kindest, best, wisest lover of his fellow-creatures. The heart that has room in it for God, grows so large, as to find room for all his train, for all he loves, and for all that he has made ; so that the church, with its many denominations of true Christians, the world, with its millions of perishing sinners, nay—all the worlds which he has created, find orbit-room to move, as in an expansive universe, within the capacious enlargement of a believer's heart. For while the love of sin acts as an astringent—contracting the natural heart, shutting and shrivelling it up—The love of God expands and enlarges its dimensions. Piety never fails to quicken the pulse of love, warm and strengthen our better feelings, and send forth fuller streams of natural affection toward all that have a claim on us, just as a strong and healthy heart sends its tide of blood along the elastic arteries to every extremity of the body.

This new heart, however, mainly consists in a change of the affections as they regard spiritual objects. Without again travelling over ground which we have already surveyed, just look at the frame and feelings of an unconverted man. His mind being carnal, is enmity or hatred against God. This may be latent—not at first sight apparent, nor even suspected—but how soon does it

appear when put to the proof? Fairly tried, it comes out like those unseen elements, which chemical tests reveal. Let God, for instance, by his providences or precepts thwart the wishes or cross the propensities of our unrenewed nature—let there be a collision between His will and ours—and the latent enmity flashes out like latent fire when a cold black flint is struck with steel.

The apostle pronounces men to be by nature lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; and is it not a fact that the services of religion are so contrary to all our natural tastes, that we are prone to say of them, as of that day which brings heaven down to earth—"It is a weariness; when will it be over?" The affections of the natural man, like the branches of a weeping willow—droop to the earth, and sweep the ground; harmless or deleterious, their bent is earthward. This world is his god; his heaven is below; the paradise he seeks is here; his ten commandments are the opinions of men; his sins are his pleasures; his prayers are a task; his sabbaths are his longest, weariest days; and, although no sheeted ghosts rise at midnight and leave the churchyard to walk the world till cock crowing or break of day, in thoughts of God, of judgment, of eternity, he has spectres that haunt him, to escape from which he will fly into the arms of vice, plunging deeper and deeper into sin.

Now, if you have received a new heart, this state is past, or is passing. Your affections, as you know, are not dried or frozen up; warm, or rather warmer than

ever—they are still flowing, only flowing toward other objects, and in another channel. In obedience to a divine impulse, their course is not only in a different, but in a contrary direction; for the grace of God works such a thorough change of feeling, that what was once hated you now love, and what was once loved you now loathe; you fly from what once you courted, and pursue what once you shunned.

For example, Was there not a time when, like Adam, cowering among the bushes of the garden, you tried to hide yourself from God? Like Jacob, when about to encounter an angry brother, did you not once tremble at the prospect of meeting God? How did you fret under the yoke of his law? In those who bore his image, how did you revile, and shun, and hate him? You could not banish him from the universe, but how did you try to banish the thought of him from *your* thoughts, and so put him and keep him out of your mind, that it might be that black, cold, empty, dark, dead, atheistic spot of this creation, where God should not be? Believers! oh what a blessed revolution has grace wrought? Praise ye the Lord. Although our attainments come far short of David's and the love of our bosoms may burn with a dim and much feebler flame, and we should therefore perhaps pitch the expression of our feelings on a lower key, let him express for us the language of a renewed heart—"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thy testimonies are better to me than thousands of gold and silver. Like as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth

my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. I love the Lord because he hath heard my prayer and the voice of my supplication. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts. Bless the Lord, all his works. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

III. In conversion God gives a new spirit.

Conversion does not bestow new faculties. It does not turn a weak man into a philosopher. Yet, along with our affections, the temper, the will, the judgment partake of this great and holy change. Thus, while the heart ceases to be dead, the head, illuminated by a light within, ceases to be dark; the understanding is enlightened; the will is renewed; and our whole temper is sweetened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. To consider these in their order, I remark—

By this change the understanding and judgment are enlightened. Sin is the greatest folly, and the sinner the greatest fool in the world. There is no such madness in the most fitful lunacy. Think of a man risking eternity and his everlasting happiness on the uncertain chance of surviving another year. Think of a man purchasing a momentary pleasure at the cost of endless

pain. Think of a dying man living as if he were never to die. What convert to God can review his life and look back upon his unconverted state, without saying with David, "Lord, I was as a beast before thee?"

Now conversion not only restores God to the heart, but reason also to her throne. Time and eternity are now seen in their just proportions—in their right relative dimensions; the one in its littleness, and the other in its greatness. When the light of heaven rises on the soul, what grand discoveries does she make—of the exceeding evil of sin, of the holiness of the divine law, of the infinite purity of divine justice, of the grace and greatness of divine love. On Sinai's summit and on Calvary's cross, what new, sublime, affecting scenes open to her astonished eyes! Now, as by one convulsive bound, she leaps to the conclusion that salvation is the one thing needful, and that if a man will give all he hath for the life that now is, much more should he part with all for the life to come. The Saviour and Satan, the soul and body, holiness and sin, have competing claims; and between these reason now holds the balance even, and man finds, in the visit of converting grace, what the demoniac found in Jesus' advent. The man whose dwelling was among the tombs, whom no chains could bind, appears seated at the feet of Jesus, "clothed, and in *his right mind*."

By this change the will is renewed. Bad men are worse, and good men are better than they appear. In conversion the will is so changed and sanctified, that although a pious man is in some respects less, in other

respects he is more holy than the world gives him credit for. The attainments of a believer are always beneath his aims; his desires are nobler than his deeds; his wishes are holier than his works. Give other men their will—full sway and swing to their passions—and they would be worse than they are; give that to him, and he would be better than he is. And if you have experienced the gracious change, it will be your daily grief that you are not what you not only know you should be, but what you wish to be. To be complaining with Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me; that which I would I do not, and what I would not, that I do,” is one of the best evidences of a gracious, saving change.

Children of God! let not your souls be cast down. This struggle between the new will and the old man—painful and prolonged although it be—proves beyond all doubt the advent of the Holy Spirit. Until the Saviour appeared there was no sword drawn, nor blood shed in Bethlehem, nor murderous decree issued against its innocents—they slept safely in their mothers’ bosoms, Herod enjoyed his security and pleasure, and Rachel rose not from her grave to weep for her children because they were not. Christ’s coming rouses all the devil in the soul. The fruits of holy peace are reaped with sharp swords on the field of war; and this conflict within your breast proves that grace, even in its infancy a cradled Saviour, is engaged in struggling with, and strangling the old Serpent. When the shadow of calamity falls on many homes, and the tidings of victory come with

sad news to anxious families, and the brave are lying thick in the deadly breach, men comfort us by saying, that there are things worse than war. That is emphatically true of this holy war. Rejoice that the peace of death is gone.

By conversion the temper and disposition are changed and sanctified. Christians are occasionally to be found with a temper and tone of mind as little calculated to recommend their faith, as to promote their happiness. I believe that there are cases in which this is due to a deranged condition of the nervous system, or the presence of disease in some other vital organ. These unhappy persons may thus be more deserving of our pity than censure. This is not only the judgment of Christian charity, but of sound philosophy, a conclusion to which we are conducted in studying the union between mind and body, and the manner in which they act and react upon each other. So long as grace dwells in a "vile body," one which is the seat of frequent disorder and many diseases—these infirmities of temper no more admit, perhaps, of being entirely removed, than a defect of speech, or some physical deformity. The good temper for which we take credit, may be the result of buoyant health and a well developed frame—a physical more than a moral virtue; while an ill-temper, springing from bad health, or an imperfect organization, may be a physical rather than a moral defect—giving its victim a claim on our charity and forbearance. But, admitting this apology, making this allowance for the unhappy tone and temper of some pious men, his defect is one

which the true Christian will bitterly bewail, and, regretting his infirmity more than others do a deformity, he will carefully guard and earnestly pray against it. Regarding it as a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, it will often send him to his knees in prayer, that the grace which triumphs over nature may be made "sufficient for him."

Those, however, who, having no such plea to urge, are envious, sour, discontented, irritable, uncharitable, have good ground to suspect the genuineness of their Christianity. Grace sweetens where it sanctifies. In the name of God and Christianity, what has Christ to do with Belial? What has grace to do with that fretful, or avaricious, or jealous, or malignant, or implacable disposition, which is utterly opposed to the genius of the Gospel and the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ? Am I told that his disciples sought fire from heaven to consume their enemies? Am I told that, with the intolerance of bigotry, and a narrowness of mind still too common, they thought to put down those whom they regarded as rivals? Am I told that, set on fire of an earthly ambition, they blazed out into unseemly quarrels with each other? Am I told that, even on the solemn eve of a Saviour's sufferings, when their tears should have quenched all unhallowed fires, they strove for the highest place in the kingdom? Am I told how harshly they silenced the cries, and rebuked the importunity of suffering, how haughtily these proud fishermen bore themselves to the mothers and babes of Israel? True; but this temper passed away. Their master cast out

the unclean spirit. Pentecost baptized them with a gentler nature. With the peace of Jesus, they received his generous, gracious, loving, forbearing, forgiving spirit. These Elishas entered on their mission clothed in the mantle of an ascended Master. Had it been otherwise—had they not, so to speak, been made of love, as well as messengers of love—had the grace they preached not breathed in every tone, and beamed in every look—had they not illustrated in their practice the genius of the Gospel, their mission had been a signal failure; they had never won the hearts of men; they had never made their way in a resistant world—never conquered it. Just as it is by pliant, not stubborn iron, that locks are picked, the hearts of sinners are to be opened only by those who bring a Christ-like gentleness to the work; and who are ready, with Paul's large ideas, and loving liberal heart, to accommodate themselves to circumstances, to be all things to all men, if so be that they may win some. Never had these disciples gone forth "conquering and to conquer," had they gone forth from Jerusalem in their old bigoted, quarrelsome, unsanctified temper. They might have died for Christianity, but she had died with them; and, bound to their stake, expiring in their ashes, she had been entombed in the sepulchre of her first and last apostles.

I pray you, then, to cultivate the temper that was in Jesus Christ. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for

Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Is he like a follower of the Lamb who roars and rages like an angry lion? Is he like a pardoned criminal who sits moping with a cloud upon his brow? Is he like an heir of heaven, one destined to a crown, who vexes and frets over some petty loss? Is he like one in whose bosom the Dove of heaven is nestling, who is full of all manner of bile and bitterness? Oh, let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus. A kind, catholic, gentle, loving temper presents religion in its most winning aspect; and by its silent and softening influence you will render more real service to Christianity than by the loudest professions, or any exhibition of a cold and skeleton orthodoxy. Shew that it is with the believer under the influences of the Spirit as with fruit ripening beneath the genial influences of heaven's dews and sunbeams. Hard at first, it grows soft; sour at first, its juices become sweet; green at first, it assumes in time a rich and mellow colour; at first adhering tenaciously to the tree, when it becomes ripe, it is ready to drop at the slightest touch. So with the man who is ripening for heaven. His affections and temper grow sweet, soft, mellow, loose from earth and earthly things. He comes away readily to the hand of death, and leaves the world without a wench.

IV. In conversion God gives a heart of flesh. "I will give you a heart of flesh."

Near by a mass of rock that had fallen from the

overhanging crag—which had some wild flowers growing in its fissures, and on its top the foxglove, with its spike of beautiful but deadly flowers,—we once came upon an adder as it lay in ribbon coil, basking on the sunny ground. At our approach the reptile stirred, uncoiled itself, and raising its head, with eyes like burning coals, it shewed its venomous fangs, shook its cloven tongue, hissed, and gave signs of battle. Attacked, it retreated ; and, making for that grey stone, wormed itself into a hole in its side. Its nest and home were there. And in looking on that shattered rock—fallen from its primeval elevation—with its flowery but fatal charms, the home and nest of the adder, where nothing grew but poisoned beauty, and nothing dwelt but a poisoned brood, it seemed to us an emblem of that heart which the text describes as a stone, which experience proves is a habitation of devils, and which the prophet pronounces to be desperately wicked. I have already explained why the heart is described as a stone. It is cold as a stone ; hard as a stone ; dead and insensible as a stone. Now, as by the term “flesh” we understand qualities the very opposite of these, I therefore remark that—

In conversion a man gets a warm heart.

Let us restrict ourselves to a single example. When faith embraces him, how does the heart warm to Jesus Christ ! There is music in his very name. “His name is as an ointment poured forth.” All the old indifference to his cause, his people, and the interests of his kingdom has passed away ; and now these have the warmest place

in a believer's bosom, and are become the objects of its strongest and tenderest affections. The only place, alas ! that religion has in the hearts of many is a burial place ; but the believer, whose soul is a temple, not a tomb can say with Paul, "Christ *liveth* in me." Nor is his heart like the cottage of Bethany, favoured only with occasional visits. Jesus, abiding there in the double character of guest and master, is its most loving and best loved inmate ; and there subsists a difference as great between that heart as it is, and that heart as it was, as between the warm bosom where, folded in Mary's arms, the Infant slept, and the dark cold sepulchre where his weeping followers laid and left the Crucified.

Is there such a heart in you ? Do you appreciate Christ's matchless excellences ? Having cast away every sin to embrace him, saying with Ephraim, "what have I to do any more with idols ?" do you set Jesus above your chiefest joy ? Would you leave father, mother, wife, children, to follow him, with bleeding feet, over life's roughest path ? Rather than part with him, would you part with a thousand worlds ? Were he now on earth, would you leave its loftiest throne to stoop and tie his latchet ? If I might so speak, would you be proud to carry his shoes ? Then, indeed, you have got a new heart, the "heart of flesh." The new love and the old love may still meet in opposing currents ; but in the war and strife of these antagonistic principles, the heavenly shall overpower the earthly, as at the river's mouth I have seen the ocean tide, which

came rolling in with a thousand billows at its back, fill the channel, carry all before its conquering swell, dam up the fresh water, and with resistless power drive it back upon the land.

In conversion a man gets a soft heart.

As "flesh" it is soft and sensitive. It is flesh, and can be wounded or healed. It is flesh, and feels alike the kiss of kindness and the rod of correction. It is flesh; and no longer like a stone, hard, obdurate, impenetrable to the genial influences of heaven. To change the figure, once a hard block of ice, it has been melted by the beams of the sun, and turned into flowing water. How are you, who have been renewed in heart, moved now, stirred now, quickened now, sanctified now, by truths once felt no more than dews falling from starry heavens upon a rugged rock? The heart of grace, endowed with a delicate sensibility, vibrates to the slightest touch of a Saviour's fingers. How does the truth of God affect it now? A stone no longer, it melts under the heavenly fire—a stone no longer, it bends beneath the hammer of the word; no longer like the impenetrable rock, on which rains and sunbeams seem wasted, it receives the impression of God's power, and retains the very footprints of his presence. Like the flowers that close their eyes at night, but waken at the voice of morning, like the thirsty earth that gapes in summer drought, the new heart opens to receive the bounties of grace and the gifts of heaven. Have you experienced such a change? In proof and evidence

of its reality, is David's language yours—"I have stretched out my hands unto thee. My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land?"

In conversion a man gets a living heart.

The perfection of a saint's life is death—is to be dead to sin, but alive to righteousness, alive to Christ, alive to everything which touches his crown and kingdom. With Christ living in his heart, the believer feels that now he does not belong to himself, and is not his own. As another's, and purchased at a great price, the grand object of his life is to live to Christ. He reckons him an object worth living for, had he a thousand lives to live; worth dying for, had he a thousand deaths to die. He says with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." In the highest sense alive, he is dead—dead to things he was once alive to; and he wishes that he were more dead to them—thoroughly dead. He wishes that he could look on the seductions of the world, and sin's most voluptuous charms, with the cold, unmoved stare of death, and that these had no more power to kindle a desire in him, than in the icy bosom of a corpse. "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

It is a test and sure mark of grace, that the believer, in his progress heavenward, grows more and more alive to the claims of Jesus. If you "know the love of Christ," his is the latest name you will make an effort to utter; his the latest thought you will desire to form; upon him you will fix your last look on earth; upon him your first in heaven. When memory is oblivious

of every other object—when all that attracted the natural eye is wrapt in the mists of death—when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of the mouth, and speech is gone, and sight is gone, and hearing gone, and the right hand, lying powerless by our side, has lost its cunning, Jesus! then may we remember thee! If the shadows of death are to be thrown in their deepest darkness on the valley, when we are passing along it to glory, may it be ours to die like that saint, around whose bed wife and children stood, weeping over the wreck of faded faculties, and a blank departed memory. One had asked him, “Father, do you remember me?” and received no answer, and another, and another, but still no answer. Then, all making way for the venerable companion of a long and loving pilgrimage—the tender partner of many a past joy and sorrow—his wife, draws near. She bends over him, and as her tears fall thick upon his face, she cries, “Do you not remember me?” A stare—but it is vacant. There is no soul in that filmy eye; the seal of death lies upon these lips. His sun has gone down, and life’s brief twilight is darkening fast into a starless night. At this moment one, calm enough to remember how the love of Christ’s spouse is “strong as death”—a love that “many waters cannot quench”—stooped to his ear, and cried, “Do you remember Jesus Christ?” The word seemed to recall the spirit hovering for a moment, ere it took wing to heaven. Touched as by an electric influence, the heart beat once more to the name of Jesus; the features, fixed in death, relax; the countenance, dark in death, flushes up like the last gleam of

day; and, with a smile in which the soul passed away to glory, he replied, "Remember Jesus Christ! dear Jesus Christ! he is all my salvation, and all my desire."

By conversion man is ennobled.

Infidelity regards man as little better than an animated statue, living clay, a superior animal. She recognises no jewel of immortality as enshrined in this earthly casket. Believe her, and man's future being is a brilliant but baseless dream; death, an everlasting sleep; and that dark, low, loathsome grave our eternal sepulchre.

Vice, again, looks on man as an animal formed for the indulgence of merely brutal appetites. She sees no divinity in his intellect, nor pure feelings, nor lofty aspirations worthy of cultivation for the coming state. Her foul finger never points him to the skies. Powers and feelings which might have been trained to heaven she leaves to trail upon the ground; to be soiled in the mire, trodden in the dust, or to entwine themselves around the basest objects. In virtuous shame, purity, integrity, gentleness, natural affection, she blights with her poisonous breath whatever vestiges of beauty have survived the fall; and, having done her perfect work, she leaves man a wreck, a wretch, an object of loathing, not only to God and angels, but—lowest and deepest of all degradation—an object of scorn and loathing to himself.

While infidelity regards man as a mere animal, to be dissolved at death into ashes and air, and vice changes

man into a brute or devil, Mammon enslaves him. She makes him a serf, and condemns him to be a gold-digger for life in the mines. She puts her collar on his neck, and locks it; and bending his head to the soil, and bathing his brow in sweat, she says, Toil, Toil, Toil; as if this creature, originally made in the image of God, this dethroned and exiled monarch, to save whom the Son of God descended from the skies, and bled on Calvary, were a living machine, constructed of sinew, bone, and muscle, and made for no loftier end than to work to live, and live to work.

Contrast with these the benign aspect in which the Gospel contemplates man. Religion descends from heaven to break our chains. She alone raises me from degradation, and bids me lift my drooping head, and look up to heaven. Yes, it is that very Gospel which by some is supposed to present such dark, degrading, gloomy views of our destiny, which lifts me from the dust and the dunghill to set me among princes—on a level with angels—in a sense above them. To say nothing of the nobility grace imparts to a soul, which is stamped anew with the likeness and image of God, how sacred and venerable does even this body appear in the eye of piety! No longer a form of animated dust; no longer the subject of passions shared in common with the brutes; no longer the drudge and slave of Mammon, the once “vile body” is changed into a temple of the Holy Ghost. Vile in one sense it may be; yet what though it be covered with sores? what though it be clothed in rags? what although, in

unseemly decrepitude, it lack its fair and pleasant proportions? this poor, pale, sickly shattered form is the casket of a precious jewel. This mean and crumbling tabernacle lodges a guest nobler than palaces may boast of. Angels hover around its walls. The Spirit of God lodges there. What a powerful incentive to holiness, to purity of life and conduct, lies in the fact that the body of a saint is the temple of the living God!—a truer, nobler temple than that which Solomon dedicated by his prayers, and a greater than Solomon consecrated by his presence. In Popish cathedral, where the light was streaming through painted window, and the organ pealed along lofty aisles, and incense floated in fragrant clouds, and candles gleamed on cups of gold, and silver crosses, we have seen the worshipper uncover his head, raise an awe-struck eye on the imposing spectacle, and drop reverently on bended knee to kiss the marble floor. We knew that sooner would he be smitten dead upon that floor than be guilty of defiling it. Blinded devotee, how does he yet rebuke us! We wonder at his superstition; how may he wonder at our own profanity! Can we look on the profound veneration he expresses for an edifice which has been erected by some dead man's genius, and holds but some image of a deified Virgin, or bones of a canonized saint, and which—proudly as it raises its old cathedral towers—time shall one day cast to the ground, and bury in the dust; can we, I say, look on that, and, unless callous to rebuke, not feel reproved by the spectacle? In how much more respect, in how much higher, holier venera-

tion should we hold this body! The work of God, a fabric “fearfully and wonderfully made,” the shrine of immortality, dedicated to the Son of God, and consecrated by the presence of the Spirit, it is a living temple, over whose porch the eye of piety can read what the finger of inspiration has written—“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

THE RENOVATOR.

And I will put my spirit within you.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 27.

THERE are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." They form the mystery of one Godhead, and act in harmony. As might be expected, the divine record represents these three Persons as co-operating in creation. For example, Paul crowns the Son with the honours of a work, usually ascribed to the Father. Mark what he says of the Son—"By *him* were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers;" and speaking elsewhere of the Father, he says—"He, who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake to our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Now, as to the third person, or Holy Spirit, we discover indications of his existence even in the Mosaic record of creation. He appears in the earliest epochs of time, and amid those sublime and magnificent spectacles with which the Bible opens.

The curtain rises upon the first act of creating

power, and through the enveloping shroud of darkness, we behold the earth—a shapeless mass, crude and chaotic. It is a world in embryo. “The earth was without form and void.” Yet at this early period, when there was neither golden cloud nor blue sky, nor green land, nor silver sea; when no rolling wave broke upon the shore, and there were no shores for waves to break on; when no mountain peak rose to greet the morning sun, and there was no sun to shine on them; when no wing of bird was cleaving the air, nor fin of fish the waters; when—like the rude and various materials from which an architect proceeds to rear the fabric he has designed—the elements of fire, air, earth, and water lay mingled in strange confusion, through the darkness that lies on the face of the deep, we discover a mysterious and living presence. It is the Spirit of God. He is moving, and at work. He presides at the birth of time. Evoking order from confusion, he forms the world in the womb of eternity, and is preparing a theatre for scenes and events of surpassing grandeur. Concerning that early period of creation, Moses has recorded this important fact—“The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.” In this glorious creation, therefore—in our beautiful world, and these star-spangled skies—we behold the mighty monuments of his presence and power. Ancient of days and Architect of the universe, he sprung the arch of that crystal dome, and studded it over with these gems of light. Listen to the magnificent hymn of the Patriarch—“He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon

nothing. He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it; he hath compassed the waters with bounds, and divideth the sea with his power. By his *Spirit* he hath garnished the heavens." In the temple of nature, therefore, as in that of grace, we adore a Godhead—the three in one; and see Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the presiding and co-equal authors of a first creation.

But let us come to man. The pillar is erected, and stands ready for its capital. The house, finished and furnished, now waits its tenant. He is about to be formed who shall be not merely a work, nor a servant, but a son of God; a mirror in which Divinity may complacently contemplate itself; a being who is to exhibit what, amid their bright and beautiful forms, neither sun, nor sea, nor earth could boast of—an image of God. In man the crown of creation is to be topped with its brightest gem. This province of the divine empire is to have a king, who, wielding a delegated sceptre, shall exercise dominion "over the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the cattle, and the creeping things." It is a great occasion. And, as was worthy of it, the three persons of the Godhead appear upon the scene. God fashions the plastic clay into the form of man, and moulds those features which have descended to us from his hand;—bending over the prostrate and inanimate statue, he breathes into its hollow nostrils the subtle element of life;—rushing in, this mysterious power sets its organs into play, and, as the heart begins to beat, and the current of the blood to flow, Adam opens his

eyes on the world. But, ere, by this greatest crowning act, he closes the drama of creation—addressing the Son on this hand and the Spirit upon that, the Father saith, “Let us make man in *our* image.”

In many respects, the new corresponds with that old creation—the Paradise Regained with the Paradise Lost. Man is the subject of both ; his good and the divine glory are the ends of both ; devils are the enemies, and angels are the allies of both ; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are the authors of both. Now, while the first chapter of Genesis—raising a portion of the curtain which hangs before the mysteries of creation—shews us the Holy Spirit as an active agent in that work, my text introduces the same divine person, as discharging functions not less important in the more exalted and enduring work of a new creation. The Father decrees redemption ; the Son procures it ; the Holy Spirit applies it ; and for the latter purpose this promise is both given and fulfilled—“I will put my Spirit within you.” In illustration of the doctrine, I remark—

I. The Holy Spirit is the great agent in conversion and sanctification.

Man cannot be saved unless elected, nor elected without the Father ; nor saved unless redeemed, nor redeemed without the Son ; nor saved unless converted, nor converted without the Spirit. Do you ask why ? Is there not a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for

uncleanness? Is it not true that whosoever seeks salvation there, may wash and shall be clean? Most true. Jesus has filled that fountain with blood, and, bathed there, the foulest become white as snow. Blessed truth! that fountain is free to all; free as air or sunlight, free as the waves of ocean, where proud man, who parcels out God's earth, and forbids other foot than his own to tread it, claims no exclusive property—where the beggar may bathe abreast of a king.

What need I more, then? you may ask. We require much more. Our necessities resemble those of the cripple—who, for thirty years, sat uncured by Bethesda's pool, nor took his anxious eye off the water as he waited for its first stir and ruffle. The healing of that pool was regulated by a remarkable law, and it was this. Like an electric battery, which to one and the first touch discharges all its fluid, this pool gave off at once all its virtue, and cured but one at a time. He got its benefit who first stepped in after the angel's descent. Whatever his disease might be, he was cured. Was he dumb? he sung. Was he blind? he received his sight. Was he a cripple? he shouldered his crutch, and walked. And why had this man sat out these weary years unhealed? Had the vision tarried, and did the rare advent of the angel to this pool suggest the figure, "Like angel's visits, few and far between?" These waters had been often agitated during that long period of thirty years. Often. Many a time this cripple had seen the sudden spring, and heard the loud plunge, as some neighbour flashed into the pool. Many a time, as the cured left

the scene, had he followed them with envious eyes. Many a time had he witnessed proofs of the healing power—the lame man bounding away like a deer, the song of the dumb ringing out his joy, and pallid sickness standing on the brim of the watery mirror, and—as she contemplated her beautiful image—smiling to see the light of her beaming eyes, and fresh roses blowing upon her wasted cheek. Poor man! why was he not cured as well as others? He was impotent, powerless; he could not go down unassisted; and—as he told Jesus—one of the friendless poor, “he had no one to help him in.” Even so, although seated by the fountain, where sins are lost and sinners washed, we need assistance, some one to help us in. In the words of Paul, we are “without strength;” and it is for the very purpose of helping us to seek, to believe in, to love—in one word, to embrace the Saviour—that God gives his Holy Spirit. For this end he fulfils the promise, “My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength made perfect in weakness.”

In a preceding discourse, we compared the change wrought in conversion to the removal of what was old and shattered, and the supplying of its place with a new machinery. But what is mere machinery? Just what the new heart were without the Spirit of God. Besides the machinery, we must have a moving power. Of what use were that which is to be moved, without a force adequate to move it? Without a main-spring within the clock, however complete the number and perfect the workmanship of its wheels, pinions, pivots, and axles,

these hands would stand on the face of time, nor advance one step over the encircling hours. So were it with the renewed soul without the Spirit of God to set its powers in motion, bring them into play, and impart to their movements a true and heavenward character. For this purpose God fulfils the promise, "I will put my Spirit within you."

In order to illustrate this truth, and with God's blessing fix it in your heart, let me avail myself of the element which gives a name to the Spirit, and which our Saviour selects as its emblem—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Here is a noble ship. Her masts are all in ; and her canvas is all shaken out ; yet no ripple runs by her side, nor foam flashes from her bows, nor motion has she but what she receives from the alternate swell and sinking of the wave. Her machinery is complete. The forests have masted her ; in many a broad yard of canvas a hundred looms have given her wings ; her anchor has been weighed to the rude sea chaunt ; the needle trembles on her deck ; with his eye on that friend—unlike worldly friends—true in storm as in calm, the helmsman stands impatient by the wheel ; and when, as men bound to a distant shore, the crew have said farewell to wives and children, why lies she there over the self-same ground—rising with the flowing, and falling with the ebbing tide ? The cause is plain. They want a wind to raise that drooping pennon, and fill these

empty sails. They look to heaven—and so they may—the skies only can help them here. At length their prayer is heard. The pennon flutters at the mast head; spirits of the air sing aloft upon the yards; the sails swell; the wind whistles through the rattling eordage; and now, like a steed, touched by the rider's spur, she starts, bounds forward, plunges through the waves, and—heaven's wind her moving power, is off, and away, amid blessings and prayers, to the land she is chartered for. Even so, although heaven born, heaven called, heaven bound, endowed with a new heart, new mind, new will, we stand in the same need of celestial influences—of the grace and spirit of God. That heart, mind, and will, are the machinery, He is the moving power; these the instruments, but He the agent.

This divine gift neither circumscribes nor supersedes our own exertions. These gracious influences descend not to set us idle, any more than the breeze blows to send the sailor to his hammock and rock him over in the arms of sleep. On the contrary, long away and wearying to be home, his eye often turned homeward across the water's waste, he shakes out every yard of canvas on the bending mast, and works the harder to gain the full advantage of propitious winds. It should be so with us. May it be so with us! The more full the gifts and divine breathings of the Spirit, the busier let us be—more diligent in the use of prayer, of sacraments, of the Bible, of all those ordinances through which the Spirit works, and bears believers onward and homeward in their heavenly course.

Were God, provoked by our indifference, to withdraw or withhold his Spirit, ah ! would it not be with the best of us as in a dead calm at sea ? No progress would be, or could be made ; or rather, with the run of the tide in a contrary direction—the tendencies of a depraved nature and a wicked world working the other way—instead of gaining ground, we should drift astern. Alarming and warning sinners, God says in the Bible, “Remember Lot’s wife.” Here we may say to saints, Remember David. With what full sail is he bearing on to heaven ! how far a-head he has shot of his countrymen and contemporaries ! But he enters into temptation ; yields to it ; falls into sin ; the Spirit is withdrawn, and, although finally saved, how nearly is he lost ! What a fearful backsliding ! what an awful warning—and, yet—an example full of encouragement to a penitent backslider—see, in his case, how God fulfils the promise, “I will heal thy backsliding and love thee freely.”

Let me now urge on you the advantage and the duty of improving to the utmost every season of heavenly visitation. You cannot command the influences of heaven. There are seasons more favourable and full of grace than others ; and in this there is nothing surprising, but much that is in harmony with the common dispensations of Providence. Does not the success of the farmer, seaman, merchant, of men in many other circumstances, chiefly depend on their seizing and improving opportunities, which come and go like showers—which flow and ebb like the tides of ocean ? The sea, for example, is

not always full. Twice a day she deserts her shores, and leaves the vessels high and dry upon the beach; so that they who would sail must wait and watch, and take the tide; and larger ships can only get afloat, or, if afloat, get across the bar and into harbour, when, through a favourable conjunction of celestial influences, in stream or spring tides, the ocean swells beyond her common bounds. And as the sailor has his spring tides, the husbandman has his spring time, and those showers, and soft winds, and sunny hours, on the prompt and diligent improvement of which the state of his barn and barnyard depends.

“Let it be,” said the Lord to David and his men of war, when—lying in ambush, and expecting divine assistance—they waited the battle signal, “let it be, when thou hearest the sound of going on the tops of the mulberry trees, that thou shalt bestir thyself.” Like the sound of the feet of the angelic host marching to David’s help over the tops of the trees, heaven may vouchsafe to us such a signal in some holy desire, emotion, thought, which, if yielded to and improved, may lead to heaven; but neglected, rejected, or repelled, may leave us to perish in hell. In these, which occasionally come to the most careless sinner, you feel the Spirit moving—in them you hear the Spirit calling. Improve them; and “what thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.”

If improved, who can tell but it may be with you as with one well known to us. She was a fair enough professor, yet had been living a careless, godless, Christ-

less life. She awoke one morning, and, most strange and unaccountable! her waking feeling was a strong desire to pray. She wondered. She hesitated. It was a summer day, and early dawn; and what more natural than that she should say, there is time enough—meanwhile, “a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep?” As she was drowsily sinking back again into unconsciousness, suddenly, with the brightness and power of lightning, a thought flashed into her mind, filling her with alarm—this desire may come from God; this may be the hour of my destiny—the tide of salvation, which, if neglected, may never return. Springing up, she flung herself on her knees. The chamber was changed into a Peniel, and when the morning sun looked in at her window, he found her wrestling with God in prayer. And, like one rising from a sepulchre, she came forth at the call of Jesus to follow him faithfully from that day forward, and in her future life to walk this world with God.

I. God’s Spirit is not only given to his people, but dwells in them. “I will put my Spirit within you.”

The communication between spirits, otherwise than through the medium of matter, and our bodily organs, is so great a mystery, that we are not prepared to say how far unconverted men may or may not be “possessed of the devil.” Of many a wretched slave of vice, on whom tears and prayers, and expostulations, and rewards, and punishments, have all been tried, and tried

in vain, it may be said without extravagance or exaggeration, "He is grievously tormented of a devil." There are incidents and expressions in the Word of God, which do invest the subject of demoniacal possession with a permanent, painful, and very alarming interest. On one occasion Peter endeavours to dissuade his master from the cross, and stands between him and the salvation of mankind; whereupon, as if he saw the devil looking through a disciple's eyes, and recognized his accent in a disciple's tongue, Jesus turned on Simon, saying—"Get thee behind me, Satan." Again, when Judas received the sop, it is said that "Satan entered into him," and immediately—as the ship turns to the helm, when a new hand steps on board and changes her course—he left the supper table, to do his master's business. Again, Paul speaks of a "fellowship with devils," a "cup of devils," and a "devil's table." And who knows but that those terrible spectacles of possession, where the bodies of unhappy men were seized, inhabited, tormented by unclean spirits, may have been visible emblems of the unclean and unconverted heart? When God left man at the fall, and abandoned that heart which had once been his holy and happy home, it became an empty house for Satan to occupy; and like bands of robbers, who haunt the vaults of a ruined castle, where power and grandeur, and rank once resided, many devils may be secretly lurking in the dark chambers of this desolate and dismantled palace.

We have sometimes thought that we saw the fittest emblem of our fallen state in the roofless ruins of an old

church. Now deserted, desecrated, defiled, what a change is there ! Save in the ivy, that like pity clings to the crumbling wall—sustaining and veiling its decay—and in some sweet wild flower rooted in window sill, or gaping rent, beauty and life are gone. Yet there, once on a time, many a beautiful babe was baptized to God ; there holy words were spoken ; holy vows were taken, and holy communions held. There are eyes in glory that turn with interest to that lonely spot. God and man often met there ; “ This and that man was born there.” But now the only sounds are the sighing of the wind, or the roar of the storm—the hoot of the owl, or the hiss of the serpent ; nor life is found there now, but in the brood of the night bird, which has its nest among the ruins above, or in the worms that fatten upon the dead in their cold graves below. “ The glory is departed.” Even so, once a holy shrine, but now a deserted sanctuary, may we not write “ Ichabod ” on the heart ? The ruin resounds with the echoes which the ear of fancy hears muttering among the desolate mounds of Babylon—“ Fallen, fallen, fallen ! ”

Whatever habitation the prince of darkness may have within unconverted men—and however also, holding for a time some footing, even in God’s people, he may raise up within them those thoughts of blasphemy, and desires of sin, which come as unbidden as they are unwelcome—the saints of God enjoy, what may be called, a blessed possession. Not the angels, but the Spirit of God inhabits them. Heaven has descended into their bosoms, and there they have a little heaven below. God

now in very truth not only dwells “with man,” but *in* man. “I will put my Spirit within you.” He is enshrined within them; so that as the soul dwells in the body, God dwells in the soul. “Know ye not,” says an apostle, “that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” Thus—although in a subordinate sense—the members resemble their crowned and exalted head; their bodies, like his own, are a holy temple, and the honoured shrine of him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Speaking of the man that loves him, our Lord said, “We will come unto him.” This promise is one which he fulfils in the daily communications of his word and Spirit. Earth has no lovers who meet so often as Jesus and his bride. On the lowliest and poorest Christian, God bestows the honour of daily visits. He comes at the time of prayer; he occupies the mercy seat at the stated hour of worship; and into the closet where the good man goes, he goes along with him. He is closeted there with God; and comes forth like a warrior from his tent inspired with courage, and armed for the battle of life. Happy man! he sleeps at night in God’s arms; happy man! in every trial he weeps on God’s bosom! happy man! although his fare be but a crust of bread and cup of water, he banquets every day at heaven’s royal table.

Contented, nor coveting the luxuries which wealth commands, he has bread to eat and company to keep the world knows not of; and, although he be the poorest of God’s poor ones, none of the great ones of

this earth, with their privileged and prized access to court, move in such high society. Could you see the angels who wing their flight to this moorland cottage—the telegraph of prayer, that, with lines stretched up to the throne, is ever working—the messages that go up, and the answers that come down—Jesus himself descending to bow his kingly head at that lowly door, with “Peace to this house” on his lips, gifts in his hand, love beaming in his eye and burning in his bosom, you would not wonder how its pious tenant can endure so many hardships, and yet live so contented beneath his thatch of straw. Pitying the poverty of riches, the meanness of rank, the littleness of greatness—envying no man his high acquaintances, coveting no man’s large estates—all he needs is to wear his honours meekly. Occupying a rank higher than princes inherit or kings can bestow, with a patent of nobility that never can be forfeited, all he needs is to be “clothed with humility;” while he throws open his heart and invites his Lord to come in, all he needs is to do that with the modesty of the man who said, “I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter beneath my roof.”

Here, however—as also in those words of Christ to which I have referred—God not only promises to visit his people, but by his Spirit to abide with them. “I will put my Spirit within you.” Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” For who or what else abides? Not our parents or pastors; the arms that embraced us are mouldering in the grave, and on the lips that taught us knowledge, the dust of death lies thick. Our health

may not abide;—there is a griefless, graveless land, where “the inhabitant never says that he is sick;” but faith lifts her eye to heaven, and seeks it yonder—not here. Our wealth may not abide; and so one who, better than many, remembered its uncertainty, when remonstrated with for giving lavishly to the cause of Christ, replied, “Riches take to themselves wings and flee away; and I think it best to clip them.” Our children may not abide. The earth sounds hollow to the foot—it is so full of graves. Ah! how few are the gardens where death has not left his footprints, when he came and stole away some of our sweetest flowers. Few are the trees standing on this earth, from which his axe has not lopped some goodly boughs. In this world, I have seen one and another stand bleak and branchless; and oh, how blessed for the father who, when he has laid the last survivor in the dust, returns from that saddest funeral to find God waiting for him in his empty home!

When the believer is alone—God in his Holy Spirit abiding with him—he is not alone. How happy, yet how strange a man he is! Those paradoxes by which Paul describes him—“Unknown, and yet well known; dying, and behold we live; sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things”—admit of important additions. Kill him, and he lives; bury him, and he rises; exalt him, and he is humbled; humble him, and he is exalted; curse him, and he prays for you; hate him, and he loves you; an orphan, he clings to a living father; a widow,

she weeps on the bosom and sleeps in the arms of a living husband. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow is God in his holy habitation." Piety sits on a husband, a father's grave, confident in that living relationship, and calm beneath the shield of him who says—"You shall not afflict any widow nor fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children shall be fatherless." Let a believer never count himself desolate. Nor let others ever call him so. If thy heart lodges this noblest guest, it matters not how mean thy dwelling be; God, turning even a prison into a palace, shall abide with thee there on earth, till thou art called up to abide with him in heaven.

THE NEW LIFE.

I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 27.

THE Divine Being has established a variety of laws—some of a physical, others of a moral nature. And it is as impossible to violate with impunity a moral as a physical law; although the consequences in the former case may be more remote, and the suffering may not follow so closely on the heels of the sin. Solomon asks “Can a man take fire into his bosom and not be burned?” “Can he touch pitch and not be defiled?” You at once answer no. He who drops a red hot coal into his bosom shall certainly be burned; he who falls into the water shall certainly be drowned; and if any man were mad enough to pitch himself over a lofty bartizan, he lights not on the ground as bird or angel with expanded wings—he shall certainly be dashed to pieces. Not only so, but a passive, like the active violation of nature’s laws is followed by suffering. Let a man resist her demand for sleep—let him turn a deaf ear to the calls of hunger—let him deny his body the rest and refreshment that nature requires, and he must die. Now, no less certainly shall he suffer who neglects or violates

those moral laws which have also been established by a fixed decree.

It may seem a strange, and even foolish thing to assert, but it is not the less true, that it is safer to touch fire than sin—safer in a sense to quaff a cup of poison than taste the cup of devils. He, certainly, stands a better chance of escape who violates a physical than moral law. This is difficult to be believed. And why? Just because, in the breach of moral, judgment does not, as in the breach of physical laws, follow speedily on the transgression, nor succeed it as the peal thunders on the flash. Yet it is not more strange than true; and true, for this plain, satisfactory, and unanswerable reason, that the God who instituted the laws which govern the physical world, may modify, may change, may even altogether repeal them. He has already, and not seldom done so. Iron is heavier than water; yet did not the iron axe float like a cork at the prophet's bidding? Did not the unstable sea stand up in walls of solid crystal, till the host passed over? Did naked foot, bathed in morning dew, ever feel the green sward cooler, than those three Hebrews the floor of the burning furnace, when they trod at once beneath their feet a tyrant's power and the red hot coals of fire? Fire may not burn. Water may not drown. He who gave these elements their laws may alter them as he sees meet; but that moral law which is a transcript of his own mind and will, is, and must be unchangeable as himself. Be sure, therefore, that you cannot sin with impunity. Be sure that your sin will find you out. Be sure that what you

sow you shall reap. Be sure, that although the cloud is long of gathering, it shall sooner or later explode. Be sure that sin and sorrow are linked together by an adamantine chain—durable and eternal as that which binds the creature to the throne of God. When, therefore, Satan, the flesh, or the world solicit, remember, that if your weakness yields, you are more certain to suffer, than you would be to burn the finger which you thrust into the flames. Sin is the fire that a man cannot take into his bosom, and not be burned.

Is it urged, by way of objection, that God's people are exempted from suffering—commit sin, and yet escape the penalty? True. But their exemption from future punishment forms no exception to the rule. In their case, indeed, the debtor escapes, but then the creditor is paid. The sufferings from which they are exempted were endured by their substitute, and their sins were punished in a dying Saviour. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

Entertaining these views, we ought not to be suspected of lowering the dignity or losing sight of the claims of the law in our faith in a crucified Redeemer. That holy law was not interred in Jesus' sepulchre, nor left behind with the grave clothes in his tomb. While we no longer look for life from the law, nor any longer hope to be saved by the law, yet we hold with the Apostle—hold as strongly as any can do—that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good," and that these moral laws which were enshrined

in the ark of Moses, and most awfully illustrated on the cross of Christ, have lost none of their authority. They continue to this day as imperative as those which regulate the flow and ebb of tides, control the procession of seasons, or steer the planets through the realms of space. Obedience to the moral law has indeed ceased to be the condition of salvation ; and it is well it is so. Otherwise who had been, who could be saved ? “ If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand ? ” “ Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. ” “ Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. ” The law is not now the gate of life ; yet it has not ceased, and never shall cease, to be the *rule* of life. We preach, indeed, a free and a full salvation. Glorifying in that lofty theme, we say that the greatest lawbreaker may be saved ; the foulest sinner washed white as snow ; the basest of the base, the vilest of the vile, exalted to a throne in heaven ; and that as no obedience rendered to the law since the fall of Adam can open heaven to man, so since the death of Christ no disobedience can shut its gates against him. We hold it with Paul, to be “ a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ” Blessed be God, the law, so stern-like in a sinner’s eyes, no longer carries the keys of heaven. Purchased by his blood, they are in the custody of him who is very pitiful and of great mercy, and who—never turning a deaf ear to the cry of dis-

tress—cheers the expiring hours of guilt, and said even to a thief, “To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

“Do we then make void the law through faith?” as Paul asks. Some have done so. Wild and wicked fanatics have arisen to trouble the church, and bring a gospel of grace into open contempt. They have daringly asserted that it has set them free from the obligation of these holy commandments, and granted to believers a plenary indulgence to commit all manner of iniquity. The saint, they have said, may fall into the foulest sins, and remain as pure as the kernel within a nut which has rolled into the foulness of a gutter. From such licentious and immoral principles, from doctrines not less calculated to dissolve society than to dishonour the church of Christ, child of God! shrink with holy abhorrence; this your language, “My soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.”

I know that the Apostle says, “We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held;” but are we delivered that we may sin? Assuredly not. On the contrary, we are set free that we may serve God; serve him better, holier, as Paul also says, “in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Addressing us not with the voice of Sinai’s thunders, but in the melting and yet mightier tones of a Redeemer’s love, the Gospel lays this injunction upon all, “Be careful to maintain good works.” Good works, these, although not always the believer’s attainment, will always be his aim. Committing to his heart, and enshrining there those tables which, in

honour of their excellence, Moses deposited in the tabernacle's holiest shrine, he will say, "O how I love thy law, O Lord;" and he will pray that God would fulfil to him this gracious promise of the text—"I will cause them to walk in my statutes, and they shall keep my judgments and do them."

In now addressing ourselves to the subject of that new life which the believer lives in obedience to the law of God, I remark—

I. It is a willing obedience.

Many movements take place in the universe independent of any will but that of God. The sap ascends the tree, the planets revolve round the sun, the moon waxes and wanes in her quarters, the stars rise and set in the heavens, the tides flow and ebb upon the shore, and Nature walks in God's statutes, keeping his judgments, and doing them, moved to obedience by no will but his. So soon, however, as, leaving inanimate matter, we ascend into the regions where mind and matter, or even blind instinct and matter are united, we discover a beautiful and benevolent law, by virtue of which God at once secures the happiness and provides for the welfare of his creatures. He so orders it that their will is in perfect harmony with their work; their inclinations with their interests; and their instincts with the functions which they are called on to perform. The bee constructs its cell, the bird weaves her nest, the eagle among the crags above teaches her brood to fly,

and in cairn or cave below, the fox suckles her young. These are all labours of love—labours to which they bring a willing heart. Thus their happiness lies in their work. And to ascend even into heaven, is not this the secret of its felicity? As the imperial law of gravity extends its influence to the most distant stars, so that that which rounds a tear-drop gives its shape to every sun, I cannot doubt that this law of divine benignity reaches the highest and holiest existences. The will and work of angels are in perfect harmony; therefore an angel's duty is an angel's delight.

Observe, also, how, when God changes the condition of his creatures, he accommodates their will to the change. Take, for example, that insect to which I have elsewhere alluded. It comes from the egg a creeping worm; it is bred in corruption; it crawls on the ground; and with voracious appetite it lives on the coarsest fare. In time it undergoes a wonderful metamorphosis. The wriggling caterpillar becomes a winged and painted butterfly; and at this change, with its old skin it divests itself of old habits and instincts. Now, the insect has a will as well as wings to fly. And with its bed the bosom of a flower, its food the honied nectar, its home the sunny air, and new instincts animating its frame, its will plays in harmony with its work. The change within corresponds to the change without. It spurns the ground; and, as you may gather from its merry, mazy dance, the creature is happy, and delights in the new duties which it is called to perform. Even so it is in that change which grace works in sinners. The nature of the redeemed is

so accommodated to the state of redemption, their wishes are so fitted to their wants, their hopes to their prospects, their aspirations to their honours, and their will to their work, that they would be less content to return to polluted pleasures than this beautiful creature to be stripped of its silken wings, and condemned to pass its days amid the old foul garbage,—its former food. With such a will and nature as believers now possess, their old life would be misery—would be hell. Would not the reclaimed prodigal, rather than leave his father's table and bosom for the society of harlots and the husks of swine troughs, embrace death itself and go to his grave? Even so God's people would rather not be at all, than be what once they were. Hence, on the one hand, their unhappiness in sin; hence, on the other hand, their enjoyment in God's service; hence David's ardent longing for the place of ordinances; hence the beauty of a Sabbath scene, and the sweet music of Sabbath bells, and the answer of their hearts to the welcome sound, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

Are you unconverted? Let this teach you what most you need. To men who are strangers to the happiness of piety, and have their will set contrary to the law of God, religion seems, and cannot but seem, a very sad, demure, miserable thing. Oh! it appears a weary thing to be singing psalms!—they would sing songs rather; a dull book the Bible—a most uninteresting task to be poring over these pages—they would prefer a novel or a newspaper. Rather than sit at the

communion table, they would be guests where the board groans with luxuries, bowls flow with wine, peals of laughter follow the bright flashes of wit, and thoughtless joy dances away the hours. Earth's short Sabbaths seem long, and are weary; and it is a mystery which they cannot fathom, how, when they go to heaven, (and, who is not hoping one day to get there?) they are to pass an endless Sabbath of psalms, and songs, and such listless services.

No wonder, if this is your state, that piety wears no charms to win you. Without the clean heart and the right spirit, your attempts to obey the law cannot fail to be as unpleasant as they are unprofitable. It is hard to row against the tide, hard to go against the wind, hard to swim against the stream, but harder still, under no impulse but the lash of a guilty conscience, and the terrors of a coming judgment, to attempt conformity to the will of God. And admitting your conformity to be much greater than it is, what possible value can it have in the eyes of God. If even we would rather do the work ourselves than have it done for us by a sullen, sulky servant—what pleasure can God have in your slavish service? I would not be served by a slave, I would not have a slave stand behind my chair, I would not have a slave breathe the same air, live in the same home with me; nor will Jesus Christ. His arguments are not whips—his reasons are not blows—his servants do not walk and work in clanking fetters. He is the beloved sovereign of a people who, free and devoted to his interests, are ready to die for his person and crown.

A master he is, who measures the value of service not so much by the work done, as by the willingness to do it. Even they serve that wait. Then, as the Apostle says, "Let there be first a willing mind, and it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

In short, the union between the Saviour and the believer, like the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, stand on a cordial assent. "Peradventure," said Eleazer to his master, "peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me." "Then," said Abraham, "if the woman be not willing to follow thee, thou shalt be clear from this my oath." On this condition his servant set off to woo and win a wife for Isaac. He arrives at Haran; he is introduced to Laban, and the scene that follows excites in us these two wishes.

First, Would to God, that those who hold a higher commission, being stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, were as intent on the duties of their office, as was this steward on his. Laban presses his hospitality upon the hungry man; the savoury meat appeals to his appetite; he has had a long journey, and it is reasonable surely that he take some rest, get the dust of the road washed from his feet, and refresh exhausted nature before he enters upon business! No—Pattern of fidelity! He says—"I will not eat until I have told mine errand." And would to God, also, that he who dealt with Rebecca's heart, would persuade you to accept a better offer with its tokens of better love, that you might give us, as ambassadors for Christ in his love suit, that maiden's ready answer. Isaac

had sent a far way for her. She saw his messenger. He stood in her presence, covered with the dust, and embrowned with the sun of the desert. She saw Isaac's love in these sparkling gems—the golden tokens of his affection. Her heart was won. Fair and lovely pattern of faith! Whom she had not seen she loved; she walked by faith, not by sight; and paying a last visit to a mother's grave, forgetting "her father's house and her own people," the companions of her youth, and the sweet home of her early days, she turned round to her brother, and to his question—"Wilt thou go with this man?" with maiden modesty, but masculine firmness, she replied, "I *will* go."

II. This is a progressive obedience.

To "walk" implies progress in grace. Walking is an art, and one not acquired in a moment or a day; for the power to walk is not ours, in the same sense as the power to breathe. We are born with the one power, but born without the other. Like every other habit, indeed, walking becomes so easy by use, that we are unconscious of any effort; yet step into the nursery, and you see that this art, acquired by labour, is the reward of continuous, conquering perseverance. In fact, our erect attitude and progressive motion over the ground—simple and easy as they seem—are achieved by means of most delicate and dexterous balancing. The marble statue cannot stand erect without foreign support; and you have no sooner raised a dead man, and set him up on

his feet, than he falls at yours, a heap of loathsome mortality.

In beauty or splendour, the figure of my text may yield to other images expressive of a believer's progress—such as that of a seed dropped into the soil, where striking down a delicate fibre, and sending up a green and tender shoot, it first rises into a seedling, which the finger of an infant could crush, but which, after a hundred summers have come and gone, grows into a robust and lofty tree, that, with its roots moored in the rock, lifts a proud head on high, and laughs at storms. Or, such as that furnished by the growth of day, from the first faint streak of dawn, or the face of morn—blushing as it were, to look on the crimes of earth—to the moment when the sun rises to bathe mountains, plain, and sea, in one full flood of golden light. In so far, however, as the setting forth of a very prominent and important feature of a believer's progress is concerned, the figure of my text yields the palm to none, nay, is perhaps superior to any. Other images convey the idea of progress, but this, of progress achieved by exertion—progress, the triumph of an intelligent mind, and the reward of a determined will. To explain this special point, let me borrow an illustration from our Lord, when he took a little child, and, presenting the blushing boy to the wondering assembly, said, masters of Israel, doctors of the temple, priests of the altar, chiefs of the Sanhedrim, behold this pattern; “whosoever would enter the kingdom of heaven must be as this little child.”

In this image God's people find comfort and encouragement.

Does the infant who is learning to walk abandon the attempt, or yield to despair, because its first efforts are feeble, and come far short of success? If not, why then should we despond, because in attempting to walk in God's ways we often stumble, and not seldom fall? We—many of us at least—are but babes in Christ; and he no more gives up hope of his people because they fall, than the mother her fond hope and confidence that this infant who is now creeping across the floor, shall one day stand erect in the beauty of its form, balanced on firm feet, and with free and perfect command of all its limbs. Every man was once a babe. Samson himself—the mighty Nazarite who burst asunder new-spun ropes like flax touched with fire—who with more than a giant's strength wrenched away the gates from Gaza's port, and, heaving them on his back, climbed the steep acclivity—was once a feeble suckling, a wailing infant, barely able to hold its head erect—a tottering child, hesitating to venture from a mother's knee. The believer takes a law of God, and tries to walk in it—he endeavours to resist a temptation to which he has often yielded—he fixes his eye on Jesus, and, fired with a holy ambition, attempts to follow him. He fails. Repeated attempts attended by repeated failures cast him into despondency. He lies where he fell. He gives himself up to dark and distressing doubts. Taking advantage of his failure, Satan insinuates that he has never been converted—that

his religious impressions are a delusion—that his fair profession has been a vile hypocrisy. But why should we despond? In such distressing circumstances let our children become our teachers. God ordains strength out of the mouth of babes. The lesson of the nursery is invaluable. Learning there that walking is a progressive and not a sudden attainment, I get heart to say with David, “Why art thou cast down, my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” That to my soul; and this to the devil, when he stands brandishing a sword over me, and I am lying with my back to the ground, but my eyes on heaven, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall I shall arise.”

This image stimulates to exertion, as well as comforts under failure.

In attempting to walk, the child falls; and blood stains its brow, tears fill its eye. Does it lie there just to weep? By no means. If not by speech, yet by signs that go to a mother's heart, it prays—for it can pray before it speaks. Looking through these tears, and stretching out its little arms, the infant implores her help. Nor in vain. She flies to raise it; and when she has stanchd the bleeding wound, and kissed away the tears, and soothed it in her gentle bosom, and it has there sobbed out its grief, what then, and next? Recovering from the alarm, soon forgetting its wounds, it seeks the floor again. Perhaps it has been taught some caution—perhaps it has learned to cling more to a mother's hand—perhaps it ventures less rashly from her

side ; yet, moved by an indomitable will, see how it returns to the attempt, tries it again and again, until after many falls and many blows, it earns the reward of perseverance. Now, with bright health on its cheek, grace in every motion, and beauty in all its attitudes, laughing in its joy, and luxuriating in the exercise of its new-born powers, it runs “ without wearying, and walks without fainting.”

Teachers of our children ! here let us be their scholars, and take a lesson from the nursery. Why do we make so little progress in grace ? Why at this time of day, when some of us are bowed, wrinkled, wearing the snows of many winters on our head, are we so unable to walk in God’s statutes—to keep his judgments and do them ? It is not because our education has been neglected. It is not because any child has in a mother one so fond, so kind, so quick to help, so able to raise the fallen and guide the tottering step, as we have in Him who suffered for us more than mother’s birth’s pangs, and feels for us more than a mother’s love. What child in earth’s happiest home enjoys a believer’s advantages ? “ Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ? The eternal God is thy refuge, and beneath the everlasting arms.” Why, then, is the progress of the church so slow, compared with the progress of the nursery ? Why has child after child in our families learned to walk, while the best of us are still but creeping, tottering, stumbling, on the path to heaven ?

There are mysteries in grace ; but there is no mystery

here. The reason is plain. Every hour of the day the infant is on its knees or feet; it falls, but it is to rise; it fails, but it is to begin again; its very happiness and business lie in the acquisition of this power, and the smile which lights up its beautiful face, and its proud-like air when it can stand alone, or cross the floor to throw itself laughing into a mother's arms, shew that its heart and happiness are in this work. We say to God's people, Go, by God's grace, "go and do likewise." Take more pains, be more diligent, give more prayer to learn this holy art. Let the perseverance of the nursery be imitated by the church. Let our knees be as much employed in prayer, and our powers and hours in attempting a holy life, as those of infancy in learning to walk. Oh, if we would give the same "diligence to make our calling and election sure"—the same diligence to "work out our salvation," I am certain that we should be holier—much holier than we are. Our life would rise into a happy illustration of these sublime and resplendent emblems—"Ye are the light of the world:" "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day:" "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

III. This willing and progressive obedience is the sign and seal of salvation.

Am I a child of God? How am I to know that I am? These are anxious questions with believers; and

yet they are questions that admit of a very simple answer. We have not, nor can we expect to have, such a testimony to our sonship as the Saviour received when he went up from the bed of Jordan, and the form as of a dove descended from heaven on a head, still wet with the waters of baptism. By the descent of the dove as by the voice of the thunder, his Father said—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And yet God's people enjoy that very same testimony. The descent of the Spirit is still the evidence of sonship;—its sign not a dove perched upon their heads, but the brooding dove nestled within their hearts. By his Spirit God creates them "anew in Jesus Christ unto good works;" and by these—by the fruits of a holy life, by the joys of the Holy Ghost, by the advancing stages and ascending steps of a holy progress—his spirit witnesses with their spirits that they are sons of God. A witness this, as uncertain, and therefore as satisfactory as the voice of the skies, or the approving verdict of final judgment.

The fruit is now, as it shall be hereafter, the test of the tree. And since there is no such thing as faith without works, without these, your profession is a lie, your faith is dead, your hope is a delusion. It is a delusion and a snare, like the phosphoric light, the product of putrefaction, which to the terror of superstitious peasants, and the destruction of unwary travellers, gleams and burns at night, above the eddying pool in whose dark depths life has been lost, and a body, evolving gases capable of spontaneous combustion, is going

to decay. Now as the fruit is the test of the tree, obedience is the test of love; hear our Lord—"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Do not mistake us. We do not mean to say that any man keeps these commandments perfectly. Alas! the history of the church, and each man's own personal experience, prove to our shame and sorrow, that God's people may, and do fall into sin; and, but for the restraining and constraining grace of God, would fall into the deepest, grossest sin. Noah drunk, Abraham equivocating, David an adulterer, Solomon a fool, Hezekiah a backslider, Peter vehemently swearing "I do not know the man," these teach us to walk softly, humbly, prayerfully, circumspectly! Oh, never leave God's side, nor let go the strong hand of grace. Cling to Christ; hang on his arm, as if the storm of Galilee were beating about your head, and every footstep were planted upon a swelling wave.

I do not say that saints will not fall into sin, but I do say that, even when they are so unhappy and unfaithful, there will be an unmistakeable difference between them and the ungodly. Judas sinned, and went and hanged himself; Peter sinned, and went out and wept. The sins of saints are the occasion of saintly sorrows. God sees them at the fountain weeping and washing away their guilt in the blood of Jesus; and, a sense of their sins bringing them to the Saviour, to Jesus himself they go with the confession of Peter—Lord, I know that I have sinned, I know that I am a great sinner; yet "thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

There is one test—nor any more sure in the laboratory of the chemist—by which to distinguish the godly from the ungodly, when both have fallen even into the self same sin. It is well worth knowing. It is very simple, and yet a most sure, I would say, an infallible criterion. It is one which a child may comprehend, and “the wayfaring man, though a fool,” may apply. I pray you to apply it, not to your neighbours’ case, but to your own—nor reject it because it is humble, and plain, and simple, and vulgar, if you will. It is the test by which you may know a sheep from a swine, when both have fallen into the same slough, and are, in fact, so bemired, that neither by coat nor colour can the one be distinguished from the other. How then distinguish them? Nothing more easy! The unclean animal, in circumstances agreeable to its nature, wallows in the mire; but the sheep—type of the godly—fills the air with its bleatings, nor ceases its struggles to get out.

THE NEW LIFE.

(Continued.)

I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 27.

THE predestination which I believe in, is that of Paul —“ Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be *conformed* to the image of his Son.” To redeem us from the power, as well as punishment of iniquity, Jesus died. For this his most precious blood was poured out upon the earth—for this the Spirit has descended from heaven. We are “called with a holy calling.” We are “called” to pluck the love of sin from our hearts, and dethrone every idol that usurps the place of God. We are “called” to nail the old man to the cross with his affections and lusts. We are “called” to be like Jesus. His meat and drink was to do his Father’s will. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” By this lofty end of a good man’s life, by the regard which you cherish to Christ, by the welfare of your soul, by the interest of other men’s souls, you are solemnly bound to beware of everything which might blemish your profession, which might obscure the lustre of your graces, which might hinder you from walking in God’s statutes, and keeping his judgments, and doing

them. So far, therefore, as circumstances permit you, see that you literally "depart from evil," and in the choice of your company and companions follow the example of David, "I am a companion to all them that fear thee;" and remember the warning of his son, "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Sin is a disease which is communicated by contagion. Shun, therefore, the place of infection. More than if they had plague or fever—avoid the company of the infected. Abjure every scene, abstain from every pleasure, abandon every pursuit, which experience has taught you tends to sin, dulls the fine edge of conscience, unfits for religious duties, indisposes for religious enjoyments, sends you prayerless to bed, or dull and drowsy to prayer. As the seaman does with surf beaten reef or iron bound shore, give these a wide berth; and, passing on, hold straight away, under a press of canvas, in your course for heaven.

Never fear to suffer; but oh! fear to sin. If you must choose between them, choose rather the greatest suffering than the smallest sin. Stand in awe of God, and in fear of temptation. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." It is not safe to bring gunpowder within the fall even of a spark; nor safe, however dexterous your driving, to shave with your wheels the edge of a beetling precipice; nor safe in the best-built bark that ever rode the waves, to sail on the outermost rim of a roaring whirlpool. The seed of the woman has indeed bruised the head of the serpent; yet beware! The reptile is not dead; and it is dangerous

to handle an adder, or touch its envenomed fangs, if the creature is alive, even though its head be crushed.

Let me also warn you that such a holy life as the text enjoins, is impossible to any but those who stand on their guard against the beginnings of evil. Take alarm at an evil thought, wish, desire. What are these, but the germs of sin—the winged seeds which, wafted on by the wind, drop into the heart, and finding in our natural corruption a fat and too favourable soil, spring up into actual transgressions? These, like the rattle of the snake, the hiss of the serpent, reveal the presence and nearneighbourhood of danger. Besides, does not the experience of all good men prove that sin is most easily crushed in the bud, and that it is safer to flee from temptation than to fight it? Fight like a man when you cannot avoid the battle, but rather flee than fight. Be afraid of temptation, avoid it, abhor it; and if caught by the enchantress, tear yourself from her encircling arms, seek safety in flight, your answer that of Joseph's chastity—"Shall I do this great evil and sin against God?"

True religion, however, consists not in a passive, but active piety. We are to *walk* in God's statutes, to keep his judgments, and to *do* them. Our pattern is not the shaven monk who wears a cowl, and tells his beads, and keeps his midnight vigils, and goes through the dull routine of mumbled prayers and irksome fastings within the walls of a monastery, remote from the world among the snows of the mountains or in the gloom of the forest; nor she who, having assumed the black veil and renounced society, seeks safety from its contamination, or solace

from its sorrows, within the cold formalities and quiet cloisters of a convent. The pattern of a Christian is that divine man, who—while he passed a brief period of probation in the lonely desert, and often spent whole nights on the mountain in solitary communion with his God—walked the corn-fields of Galilee, frequented the fishing villages on the shores of Tiberias, and was occasionally to be met with in Judah's towns, and on Jerusalem's crowded streets. Our exemplar is he, who, wherever he went, "went about doing good," earning for himself this noble opprobrium, "the friend of publicans and sinners."

Observe, also, that activity of Christian life is implied in the very terms of the text. Grant that we may thereby be exposed to hardships and temptations, from which a retiring piety might exempt us. Still, a life of active service shall prove best for others, and in the end also for ourselves. A candle set beneath a bushel is, no doubt, safe from wind and weather; but of what use is it? On whose work does it shine? Whose steps does it guide? Whose path does it illumine? I would rather burn and waste on some lofty headland to guide the bark through night and tempest to its desired haven. No light shineth for itself, and "no man liveth for himself." Besides, the very trials to which piety is exposed on the stormy heights of duty, impart to it a robust and healthy character. The strongest trees grow not beneath the glass of a conservatory, or in sheltered and sunny valleys. The stoutest timber stands on Norwegian rocks, where tempests rage, and long, hard winters reign. And

is it not also with the Christian as with the animal life? Exercise is the parent of health, and strength the reward of activity. The muscles are seen most fully developed in the brawny arm that plies the blacksmith's hammer. Health blooms ruddiest on the cheek of him, who—not nailed to a sedentary occupation, nor breathing the close atmosphere of heated chambers—but fearless of cold, a stranger to downy pillows and luxurious repose, rises with the day, sees the early worm rise in the dank meadow, hears the morning lark high over head, and, passing his hours in athletic exercises, increases his strength by spending it. Even so, the most vigorous and healthy piety is that which is the busiest, which has difficulties to battle with, which has its hands full of good works, which has—I may say—neither time nor room for evil, but aiming at great things, both for God and man, promptly, summarily dismisses temptation, with Nehemiah's answer—"I have a great work to do, therefore I cannot come down."

With so many living and dying in it without God and hope, with the whole heathen world still unconverted, with thousands, tens and hundreds of thousands at home sunk in the deepest ignorance, and slaves of the vilest sins, with members of our families or friendly circles far from God, and between whom and us—appalling thought!—death would make an eternal separation, this world has much need that we were up and doing, and throwing ourselves with eager zeal and our whole soul into the cause of active Christianity. Our opportunities of good are many and multiform. A Christian man should feel

like some strong, brave swimmer, who has hundreds around him sinking, drowning, shrieking for help. The difficulty is to make selection, on whose unhappy head first to lay a saving hand. Amid such scenes and calls, oh, it is lamentable to think how much of our time has been frivolously, if not worse than frivolously spent. "The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh;" to have enjoyed our own ease, made money, and gathered around us the comforts of life. To nobler ends be its remaining sands devoted! Take Jesus Christ for your copy. Run in God's statutes without wearying, walk in them without fainting; and let the day on which some good has not been done to ourselves and others—some glory won for God, some progress made in the divine life—be a day mourned over, wept for, this black sentence written down against it in the calendar of our life—"I have lost a day." Our Christianity is a name, a shadow, a mockery, unless we resemble him who, being incarnate God, was incarnate goodness, and of whom, although he stood alone in that judgment hall—without one brave brother's voice raised to speak for him—there were hundreds and thousands to bear witness, that he "went about doing good," the friend both of sufferers and sinners. Thus are we to fulfil the duties of the Christian life, and thus exhibit a living picture of one to whom this promise is fulfilled—"I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments and do them." In closing my observations on this part of our subject, I remark—

- I. One of the most powerful means to accomplish the duty of the text is to cultivate the love of Christ.

They who would live like Jesus must look to Jesus. The effect which should be produced by "looking to Jesus" we may learn by turning our gaze on the sun. To eyes which have been bathed in his dazzling beams, how do other objects appear? Why, all are changed. They have grown dim, if not dark and invisible. Candles, that burned bright, have lost their flame; flowers, that looked gay, are colourless; the very diamond has ceased to sparkle. And saw we Jesus Christ in the full effulgence of his Saviour glory, all sinful, even all common created objects, would appear to undergo some such change.

We see but through a glass darkly. The dimness of sin impairs our vision; but were we to see Jesus, as he shall be seen in heaven, would it not happen to us as once it befell a celebrated philosopher? Pursuing his discoveries on the subject of light—with a zeal not too often consecrated to science, but too seldom consecrated to religion—he ventured on a bold experiment. Without protection of smoked or coloured glass, he fixed his gaze steadily, for sometime, on the sun—exposing his naked eyes to the beams of its fiery disc. Satisfied, he turned his head away; but, strange to see!—such was the impression made on the organ of sight—wherever he turned, the sun was there; if he looked down, it seemed to have dropped from heaven and was burning at his feet; it shone in the top of the sky in the mirkest midnight; it blazed on the page of every book he read;

he saw it when he shut his eyes, he saw it when he opened them. The last object which he saw when he passed off into sleep, it was the first to meet his waking eyes. Now, happy were it for us if we got some such sight of Christ. Happy for us if the glory of that sun of righteousness were so impressed upon the eye of faith that we could never forget him. Ever seeing, we should ever love him. With Christ thus always present to our mind's eye, we should be able more fully to adopt the words of Paul, and say, "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

Experience has proved that of all instruments, the mightiest for conversion is the love of Jesus. None other than "Christ and him crucified," was Paul to know and preach; and in every age of the church and region of the world has not that proved the rod to smite rocky hearts? Let me illustrate the fact by referring to the oft-quoted experience of some Moravians who had gone to carry the glad tidings to the cold clime and rude savages of Greenland. Imagining that there must be a preparatory process, they commenced and continued for months to preach to these savages of their sins. They announced the wrath of God; they sounded Sinai's thunders; they blew its loudest trumpet in their ears; they appealed to conscience, to fear, to their self love and self interest. They told them of a heaven above, with a sun that never set; they told them of a

dark and dreary hell below, where nor sun, nor hope ever rose; of fire that burned and a worm that gnawed incessantly. Thus they preached. But their preaching was all in vain. The aspect of their hearers had its counterpart in the wintry landscape of these Arctic regions; characterized by a sunless sky—perpetual night—the intensest cold—a death-like silence—the land wrapped in a death-like shroud—and a sea bound fast in chains of ice. These good men changed their plan. Choosing another theme, exchanging the law for the love of God, they preached of Calvary, they expatiated on the love which brought the Man of Sorrows to a cross, and opened his arms to embrace the world. The effect was as immediate as it was remarkable. When summer came, and the snows melted on the hills; and, with sounds, like the salvos of cannon that announce a victory, the ice broke on these frozen seas; and beneath the beams of a sun, which blazed at mid-day nor set at midnight, the earth—like a corpse come to life—disrobed itself of its shroud; and the sea, rejoicing in freedom from its icy bonds, with tides that ebbed and flowed, once more answered to the influences of heaven, and rising to the wind, praised God night and day with the voices of its roaring breakers, this glorious change was but a picture of the melting, moving, transforming, regenerating power felt by the wondering savage, as he gazed with weeping eyes on the love of Christ and the bloody cross of Calvary.

As the love of Christ to us is the mightiest power to awaken faith, so in the love of our hearts to Christ

will be found the mightiest power to secure obedience, and ensure our walking in God's statutes, and keeping his judgments, and doing them. Therefore, we urge you to cultivate it ; for

Love is the most powerful of all motives.

Samson's great strength lay in his hair. Shorn of his flowing locks, he was like other men. Now the Christian's great strength lies in his love ; and when Christ invites us to sacrifices and sufferings which the world would pronounce intolerable, love is prepared both to explain and justify the language of his invitation—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for it is *easy*, and my burden, for it is *light*." On the back of love the burden loses more than half its weight, and the work that is done in love loses more than half its tedium and difficulty. It is as with a stone, which in the air, and on the dry ground, we strain at, but cannot stir. Flood the field where it lies ; bury the block beneath the rising water ; and now when its head is submerged, bend to the work. Put your strength to it. Ah ! it moves—rises from its bed—rolls on before your arm. So, when under the heavenly influences of grace the tide of love rises, and goes swelling over our duties and difficulties, a child can do a man's work, and a man can do a giant's. Let love be present in the heart, and "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God ordaineth strength." Strength ! How great strength ? Death pulls down the youngest and the strongest ; but

love is stronger than death. She welcomes sacrifices, and glories in tribulation. Duty has no burden, nor death any terrors for her.

Look at that bird, which, with wings outstretched, sits dead on the scorched and blackened tree. She might have flown away in safety. The smoke below alarmed her. Dashing through and through it on frightened wing, she screamed, as, climbing from branch to branch, the fire rose to her nest and unfeathered brood. She plunges right into the danger; and, perched on the brim of the nest—a tender mother—with her wings she fans her young as they gape and gasp for breath. At length the flames lick it with their fiery tongues—and now she leaves her perch. False to her God? False to her offspring? No. A true mother. She has abandoned it—not to soar away to heaven—but as on dewy nights and in happier hours, to seat herself above her poor nestlings; and with wings expanded, protecting them to the last—to be found dead with a dead brood beneath her. I look on that—or on this other mother, who stands with her child on the side of the sinking wreck, watching the last chance of a passing boat. She seizes it—not to leap in herself; but, lifting her boy in her arms, and printing a last loving kiss upon his lips, she drops him in, the mother herself remaining to drown and die. Or I look at that noble maid in old border story, who having caught a glance of the arrow that, shot by a rival's hand, came from the bushes on the other bank, flung herself before her lover, and received the quivering shaft in her own

true and faithful heart. I look at these things, and seeing love to be strong as death, I urge you to cultivate the love of Jesus, and pass on in its divine strength to the field of duty, and the altar of sacrifice.

I do not say that you will find it easy to walk in God's statutes, to keep Christ's commandments, and do them. To pluck sin from a bleeding heart—to place our right hand on the block and cut it off—to pull a right eye from its socket, and put our foot upon it—for a proud man to learn humility—for a lover of the world not to love it—for one whose corruption is strong to nail it to the cross, and keep it nailed there till it die—when the path of duty is strewn with flints and thorns, to walk over them with bleeding feet—is, and must be painful. There is no use of concealing it, or of denying it. No. But all the more need there is that you inflame your love by looking to Christ. Go often, and, with the shepherds, gaze on the heavenly babe as he lies on a pallet of straw in the corner of a manger. Accompany the disciples to Gethsemane, and sit with them beneath her hoary olives, listening in the still night to the groans of a Son in his Father's hands. Or join the group of weeping women, and with the other Marys and his fainting mother, take up your station beside the awful cross. Meditate on these things till you can say with David, "While I was musing, the fire burned."

Love is a motive to duty as pleasant as it is powerful.

Love weaves chains that are tougher than iron, and yet softer than silk. She unites the strength of a giant

to the gentleness of a little child; and, with a power of change all her own, under her benign and omnipotent influence duties that were once intolerable drudgeries become a pure delight. The mother, for instance, withdrawn from scenes of gaiety, without which to others and once also to herself the cup of life was flat and tasteless, is awakened to new enjoyments. She never wearies watching by her infant's cradle; nor does she grudge the nights of broken rest, the toils, the cares, the troubles that creature costs her, although these may have blanched her cheek, and paled the lustre of her eye. To cares that others would feel irksome, how cheerfully she devotes herself, even before the babe can lisp her name or reward her kindness with a look of recognition and its grateful winning smile! Nor does the father weary of the toil that wins his children's bread. The thought of these imparts strength to the arms of daily labour, fires the patriot's zeal, kindles a soldier's courage, cheers the seaman on his midnight watch, and reconciles thousands of our honest poor to a life of incessant struggle—carrying them through toils and hardships, otherwise intolerable, with a contented, cheerful, buoyant, singing spirit.

You would think it a most weary and dreary thing to lead the life which that mother passes. And why? You think so, because you are a stranger to her love. And it is just because they are strangers to the love of Jesus—because they have never known nor loved him, that many cannot comprehend, how a pious life can be a pleasant one—how any man can think that the finest music is the sound of Sabbath bells—

that God's is the best house—and the Lord's the best table. How a man of exalted grace would rather sit down with a devout peasant at the Lord's supper, than at a banquet where he was the guest of kings—and how King David should have thought a day spent in the sanctuary better than a thousand passed amid the stirring scenes of camp life, or the glory and luxuries of a palace, they cannot understand. They cannot understand how, unless they were fools or fanatics, the disciples should leave the judgment seat with bleeding stripes, and rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ; they cannot understand how Paul and Silas should have sung as cheerfully in a dungeon as ever lark that shook the night dew from its wings, and rose to greet the morning sun; they cannot understand how the only fear of that brave old man John Welch in yonder rocky prison of the Bass, was lest, that others were winning the crown of martyrdom, he should miss it, nor be counted worthy of that bloody honour. But they, in some measure at least, understand these things, whose pulse beats true to the law of God, and whose heart burns with the love of Christ. To the feet of love the ways of that law are like a fresh and flowery sward, "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace." Love changes bondage into liberty. Delighting in a law which was to our carnal nature what his chain is to the dog, what his task is to the slave, and against which our corrupt passions once foamed and fretted like angry seas on their iron shores, she takes up the harp of David, and thus celebrates its praise:—

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb.” “Oh! how I love thy law, O Lord; it is my meditation all the day.”

II. A powerful motive to the duties of the text lies in the fact, that by our obedience to these statutes the verdict of judgment shall be settled.

We are saved by grace, but shall be tried by works. We are to be judged by the “deeds done in the body, whether they were good or bad.” “Every one of us,” says Paul, “shall give account of himself to God.” Oh! how should these solemn truths hedge up our path to a close and holy walk in his statutes! The great realities of eternity are projected in outline on the field of time, and this world lies under the long, solemn shadow of coming events. Imagine them come—the day of judgment come! For whatever purpose met, there is something impressive in the spectacle of a great multitude; that vast sea of faces—that mighty aggregate of human beings with living hearts, immortal souls, eternal destinies—all in a few years to be dead and gone; the joys and sorrows, the fears and hopes, that now animate and agitate them, cold and buried in the dust. How unspeakably more solemn the scene of the resurrection! the spectacle of a world come from their

graves to judgment! that vast assembly where, amid circumstances of terrible and transcendent sublimity—thunders that rend the skies—the perpetual hills passing away—burning mountains hurled into boiling seas—the sun dying—the starry heavens rolling up like a scroll—all eyes are fixed on the “great white throne,” which rises in lonely majesty high above the countless crowd.

It shall be a solemn thing to meet the dead, and see those again—our father and mother, children, brethren—who are now mouldering in the dust. How solemn it was to part with them—to stand by the dying bed and look on as they passed away, till we heard life’s parting sigh, and saw the last convulsive quiver on the lip of one that was our own. But the meeting of those who, although lying side by side, have been long parted—who, although their coffins and dust commingle, have held no communion in these silent graves, shall be a still more solemn thing; and an awful thing, should we meet, how dreadful the thought!—with face of terror, mutual accusations and bitter reproaches; awful, overwhelming, unless we meet with mutual congratulations, to dwell together in a better than our old, sweet, earthly home—in those blissful mansions where friends in Jesus meet to part no more.

Still the solemnity rises. If it shall be a solemn thing to find ourselves face to face with the dead, how much more solemn to stand face to face with the great Judge both of the quick and dead. We have read of Jesus Christ—we have often thought of the Saviour, till we felt as if we saw him. We have followed him in fancy’s

vision through the chequered scenes of his earthly history—along his rough and bloody path, from the night that angels sung his advent, to the day when they returned to escort the conqueror home. We have seen his form stretched out—for want of a better bed—upon the dewy field, or wrapped up in coarse boat-cloak as he lay asleep amid the storm on Galilee. We have seen the eyes of pity he bent on the weeping Magdalene—the expression of reproachful love he fixed on a recreant disciple—that dying look, so full of tenderest affection, which he turned on a fainting mother. We have seen him standing calm and collected before a prejudiced and time-serving judge, patient and self-possessed beneath the bloody scourge, mute and meek before the frenzied multitude; and as we watched the successive events of the cross, like the eclipse from the face of the sun we have seen the darkness roll away from his soul, and the joy that gleamed in his dying eyes as he raised them to heaven and cried, “It is finished.” We have often in fancy seen him. When our dust revives, and graves shall give up their dead, with these very eyes we shall see him, by the light of a world in flames behold him, a God enthroned for judgment.

The day grows yet more solemn. Its solemnity reaches its highest point, culminates in the momentous issues of judgment. That Last Day is God’s day of settlement with a world that has had a long credit. It is the winding up of this earth’s bankrupt estate and each man’s individual interests. It is the closing of an open account that has been running on ever since the

Fall. It is the day when the balance is struck, and our fate is heaven or hell. And what invests my text with its most solemn importance is this, that by the manner in which we have walked in these statutes, and kept these judgments, and done them, shall our destiny be determined. The most common actions of life, its every day, every hour, are invested with the highest grandeur, when we think how they extend their issues into eternity. Our hands are now sowing seed for that great harvest. We shall meet again all we are doing and have done. The graves shall give up their dead, and from the tombs of oblivion the past shall give up all that it holds in keeping, to be witness for or witness against us. Oh, think of that, and in yonder hall of the Inquisition, see what its effects should be.

Within those blood-stained walls, for whose atrocious cruelties Rome has yet to answer, a prisoner is under examination. He has been assured that nothing he reveals shall be recorded or used against him. While making frank and ingenious confession he suddenly stops. He is dumb—a mute. They ply him with questions, flatter him, threaten him; he answers not a word. Danger makes the senses quick. His ear has caught a sound; he listens; it ties his tongue. An arras hangs beside him, and behind it he hears a pen running along the pages. The truth flashes on him. Behind that screen there sits a scribe committing to the fatal page every word he says, and he shall meet it all again on the day of trial! Ah! how solemn to think that there is such a pen going in heaven, and entering on the books

of judgment whatever we say, and wish, all we think and do. Would to God we heard it—heard it everywhere, always heard it! What a check! and what a stimulus it might prove! Are we about to sin, how strong a curb; when slow to duty, how sharp a spur. What a motive have we in that to pray for the blood that blots out a guilty past, and for such grace, in time to come, as shall enable us to walk in God's statutes, to keep his judgments, and to do them.

Do any flatter themselves that, as to *their* sins and transgressions, God hath not seen or doth not regard, or hath forgotten? Most fatal delusion! "I have seen all that Laban hath done unto thee," said the Lord to Jacob in a dream. "Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth," are his words to Elijah, when he sends him away with a charge to throw down the gauntlet at Ahab's feet, and proclaim war between heaven and his bloody house. Naboth has been most foully murdered. The crime is concealed. Cunning and cruelty have triumphed; and no living man now stands between Ahab and the vineyard. His evil genius, in his wife, approaches his bed. "Arise," says Jezebel, "Naboth is dead, arise and take possession." The king rises, rides in royal state to Jezreel, and luxuriates among the beauties and clustered grapes of his ill-got possession. Suddenly a man clothed in rough garment, unsummoned, unwelcomed, appears upon the scene. He comes boldly on intruding himself on royalty. It is Elijah. With steady step and stern look, he marches up to Ahab, and, fixing his eyes on the quailing coward, asks, "Hast thou killed and

also taken possession? In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick thy blood, even thine." Tread upon a worm and it turns on you. Now, to be a king, and yet be rudely bearded before his court by this unmannerly intruder, to have the damning deed—which had been contrived with such cunning, and executed with such success—dragged out from its concealment by this rough hand into the light of day, to be branded before his courtiers, and proclaimed throughout all the country as Naboth's murderer, stirs—if not the courage—at least the wrath of Ahab. With guilt on his scowling brow, and malignant anger flashing from his eyes, he turns on the prophet, saying, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "I have found thee," was the calm, terrible, intrepid answer.

Now, impenitent and unbelieving sinner! flatter not thyself that God hath not seen, or doth not regard. Fancy not that thy crimes are buried in a grave deeper than Naboth's, and that, because the dust of death lies on the lips of the partners, or witnesses, or victims of thy guilt, therefore you may be at ease, since the dead tell no tales. The day is coming when every unpardoned sin shall find out its author;—when what has been done in darkness shall be revealed in daylight, and the word whispered in the ear shall be published as with a trumpet upon the house top. By our obedience to these statutes and judgments we shall be tried. We have often disobeyed them, and if, on that dread day, we would not have these sins confront us as Elijah did the king—if then we would meet not our sins but our Saviour, oh let us

have immediate recourse to the blood that blotteth them out. Without a pardon, Jesus shall have no answer to us but the terrible response of Jehu, "What hast thou to do with peace?"

Peace!—Yes, there shall be peace—"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and the secret of our peace shall lie in that which gave courage to a royal favourite when arraigned before his country for a most flagrant crime. Men wondered at his strange serenity, and how, amid circumstances so trying to the strongest nerves, he could bear himself so calmly. They saw him pass on to the bar without a cloud upon his brow, or an expression of anxiety in his eye, as he gazed around him on judges, accusers, the crowd of anxious spectators. The trial began. As it proceeded, his case grew darker and darker—not so his aspect. Witness after witness bore crushing evidence against him, yet the keen eyes of his enemies could detect no quiver on his lip, or shade upon his brow. Long after hope had expired in the breast of anxious friends, and they looked on him as a doomed man, there he was, looking round serenely on that terrible array. His pulse beat calm, nor started suddenly, but went on with a stately march. Peace, like innocence, sat enthroned upon his placid brow. At length, amid the silence of the hushed assembly, the verdict of "Guilty" is pronounced, and he rises. Erect in attitude, in demeanour calm, he stands up, not to receive a sentence—which was already trembling on the judge's lip—but to reveal the secret of this strange peace and

self-possession. He thrusts his hand into his bosom, and lays on the table a pardon—a full free pardon for his crimes, sealed with the royal signet.

Would to God we all were as well prepared for the hour of death, and the day of judgment! Then fare ye well earth, sun, moon, and stars; fare ye well wife and children, brothers and sisters, sweet friends, and all dear to us here below. Welcome death, welcome judgment, welcome eternity; welcome God and Christ, angels and saints made perfect, welcome—welcome heaven. In the grace that leads to a holy walk, in some measure of godly obedience to these statutes, in the faith that worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world, have you the evidence of forgiveness? In these, do you carry in your bosom God's pardon, already sealed with the blood of Christ, and ready to be produced when you are summoned to trial? Then, you may look forward without fear and with calm confidence to the great account. These shall bear witness that you have received the righteousness which makes the sinner just. Best of all shrouds, may you be wrapped in the "clean linen" of Jesus' righteousness! With that robe around you may you rise from the grave!—this your plea—Almighty God! of my own works I have nothing to say but this, What is bad in them is mine; what is good in them is thine. Behold this pardon—look on this robe, and "know now whether it be thy Son's coat or no."

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SAINTS.

And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses ; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 28, 29, 30.

A COUNTRY cleared of its inhabitants wears a mournful aspect. It may be that the emigrant has left poverty for plenty. Still it is not a pleasant thing to see nettles growing where the garden bloomed—the smoke-stained gable—the roofless ruin—the empty window where the morning sun was wont to shine upon the Bible and a pious patriarch. There is something chilling about that cold hearth-stone where in other days the fire of a winter evening gleamed on the faces of a happy circle, while the mother plied her busy wheel, and, forgetful of the toils and dangers of the day, the shepherd dandled a laughing infant on his knee. Those are now silent walls that once sounded to the evening psalm, and from which, when Sabbath rested on the hills, a decent family went out, wending their way by the lake side to that old ruin beside whose crumbling walls the fathers

of the exile sleep. The wind, as it moans and sighs among the trees beside that roofless home, seems in our fancy's ear to sound the prophet's lament—"Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country."

Such scenes, the pain of which, indeed, lies more in fancy than in fact, give us an image of the desolation which reigned in the land of Judah during the time of the long captivity. By contrast also, they enhance the pleasure with which we turn to this glowing picture—a land teeming with inhabitants, the rich plains studded all over with cities, each busy as a bee-hive—the valleys clothed with corn, crowded with reapers, and ringing to their song—every rocky terrace in the close embrace of vines, and flocks bleating on a hundred hills. Such a scene, in fact, as surveyed from some eminence, awoke the piety and poetry of David—"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."

The fulfilment of my text to God's ancient people would have invested this prophecy with interest, even though its application had been altogether confined to the Jews; and for this reason—Their God is our God, and everything which he did for them is a most precious pledge of what he can and will do for us. "He is the dwelling-place of his people in all generations." Thus

while faith turns her eye upon the future—a prospect often dark enough—she draws courage and comfort from the past, saying, “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” But, in fact, we have more to do with this prophecy than the Jews had. Under those blessings which God poured into their cup—those temporal mercies which filled their mouths with meat, and their hearts with gladness—lie the better mercies of Messiah’s kingdom.

This shines plainly through the mystic language of the prophet. The conversion of the Gentiles is, for instance, distinctly announced in the 36th verse, “Then the heathen, that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate. I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.” In the succeeding chapter, again, the resurrection of the body and the renovation of the soul are set forth in the vision of dry bones. In the same place also have we not a kingdom more enduring far than any which has had its seat in Palestine? “And David, my servant, shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them; and they shall dwell in the land which I have given to Jacob, my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children and their children’s children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.” It appears to us that this language cannot, without violence, be applied to the old Jewish land and people; that the Roman plough-

share has buried such pious fancies under the ruins of Jerusalem. With the blood of God's Son and man's best brother on their heads, the Jews, like Cain, are vagabonds. They have no dwelling in the land which God gave to Jacob. For eighteen hundred years they have been wandering the world, nor have the soles of their feet yet found a resting-place. A nation scattered and spoiled, they are a byeword, a proverb, and a hissing—nor land, nor temple, nor oracle, nor prince, have they, nor shall have, till, turning to the hope of his best and oldest fathers, the Jew bows his proud head to the Nazarene, and kisses the feet that were nailed to a cross.

Looking at these words, therefore, in this light—taking them in an Evangelical, not a Jewish sense—let us give our attention to some of the blessings which they announce—the benefits which, to use the words of our Catechism, “flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification.” Let the believer look—

I. To the abundance of the blessings of grace.

A new born infant is the most helpless of all creatures. In its nakedness, weakness, dumbness, how dependent on a mother's love! yet not more so than God's people are on his care and kindness. Theirs are therefore circumstances in which his promises are exceedingly precious. The condition of believers closely resembles that of a man of boundless affluence, whose wealth lies, not so much in money, as in money's worth—in bills and bonds,

which have only to become due to be duly honoured. With these promises the poorest Christian is really a richer man than other men, with all their possessions ; nor would he part with one of them for the world's wealth.

This rude and naked savage—the dupe of avaricious traders—barters a coronet of gold for some worthless trinkets, and buys the wonders of a mirror, the tinkling of a bell, or a string of coloured beads, with a handful of pearls, the fit ornaments of a crown. But the child of God knows better than to sell what is of surpassing value, for anything intrinsically worthless. With this promise, “thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure,” he holds himself richer, more sure of meat to eat, and raiment to put on, than he would be with the wealth of banks. And why? Is this reasonable? No doubt of it. No logician ever reasoned more soundly. These may fail; God's promise cannot. The stars shall drop like figs from shaking skies, and these ancient heavens themselves shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of what his God has spoken shall fail, till all be fulfilled.

With such security as we have in the character of God, and such fulness as is promised in the text, it needs, therefore, only a prophet's faith to echo a prophet's speech, and—when gaunt famine walks our streets, and there are “clean teeth,” and children cry for bread, and their mothers have none to give them—to repeat the boldest words that ever fell from mortal lips—“Although the fig-tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vine; though the labour of the

olive should fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." I can fancy a sceptic exclaiming—Extravagance! fanaticism—mad fanaticism! No such thing. In his word God's people have meat to eat that you know not of—promises that have proved like the breasts of his daughter to the aged captive who had been barbarously condemned to die of hunger. In that cell, where the grey old man each day takes her infant's place, her love and ingenuity have found means to save a father's life, which his enemies never dreamt of; and the child of God, around whom fears of want are gathering, may rest assured, that he who inspired that daughter with the wit and will for such an emergency, will find ways and means to make his promise good. "The word of the Lord is a tried word"—fail us who, and what may, that cannot.

There are, indeed, times when the believer is ready to faint. Faith staggers beneath the burden, and hope all but expires. My sins are so many, my guilt so great, my burden so heavy! thus and thus they speak; now, complaining with Jacob, "All these things are against me;" and, on finding Satan so often conquering them when they should have conquered him, now crying with David, "I shall one day fall by the hand of this Saul." Well, let your burdens, your sins, your cares, be all that you describe. Answer me this question. Is it not as easy for yonder sea to carry the bulkiest ship that ever rode her waves, as the sea-weed or foam she flings upon

the shore? Is it not as easy for that affluent and effulgent sun to bathe a mountain, as to bathe a molehill in gold? Is it not as easy for this vast earth to carry on its back an Alp as a grain of sand—to nourish a cedar of Lebanon, as the hyssop on the wall? Just so, believer, it is as easy for God to supply thy greatest as thy smallest wants; even as it was as much within his power to form a system as an atom—to create a blazing sun as kindle a fire-fly's lamp.

To one, indeed, whose standing point is on the ground, objects differ much in respect of size. The cliffs tower above the low level shore; piercing the horizontal cloud of smoke, the spires rise above the humbler tenements of the town; and from her throne of snow in high midsummer, winter looks down on the valleys that lie far below smiling at the mountain's feet. Eyed from the dead level of shore or plain, objects do appear in strong contrast, high or low, great or small, big or little. But I rise on eagle's wings; I sit on the circle of the earth; higher still, I stand beside the angel whom John saw in the sun; still higher, I follow Paul in his ascent to the third heavens; and, seen from such elevations—if seen at all—dwarf and giant, the mountain and the molehill, are on one level. All these sublunary differences vanish, sink into insignificance—into nothing.

Now, here lies a believer's comfort, and here shines a sinner's hope. So vanish all distinctions between great and little wants in the eye of God; so disappears all difference between great and little sins, or great and

little sinners, to the blood of Christ; and, when our cares are cast on him who invites the burden, so sinks every difference between light and heavy burdens, to the back of Jesus. It is as easy for him to save a Magdalene, or Manasseh, or hoary thief, as the infant, that (happy creature!) just leaves its mother's womb to make of this earth a stepping-stone to heaven. Whatever be your circumstances, trials, cares, griefs, this promise fits them—"As thy day, so shall thy strength be." Be he dwarf or giant, no man can say of an assurance so full and ample, "The bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it; the covering is narrower than a man can wrap himself in it." Are you cast down because, while others have shallows, you have depths—dark depths of sorrow, and suffering, to pass through? Be it so: it is as easy for God to march his people through the wide, deep sea as across the bed of Jordan. Are your corruptions strong? Be it so: Samson found it as easy to snap a new spun cable as withes fresh gathered on the river's bank; and believe me it is as easy for God to break thy tyrant's strongest as his lightest chain. A chain of iron and a thread of flax are all one to God. The blood of thy Saviour cleanseth from every sin; and nothing being impossible, nay, not even difficult to Omnipotence, be assured that in your battle, and watch, and toil, you shall find this promise true—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

II. Consider the happiness which God's people enter on at death.

Egypt pursued the Hebrews to the very shores of the sea. There, however, the people saw the last of those tyrants and taskmasters who had made their burden heavy and their life so bitter, that the cry of their wrongs came up before the Lord. On this shore the oppressor and the oppressed are to part. In these weltering waves, from which they shrink back with dread—as some good men from death—their enemies and their griefs shall find a common grave. In these the wicked shall cease from troubling; beyond them the weary shall be at rest. Night has come. A sun they shall never see more has set on Pharaoh and his host. And, now under the light that illumined the camp of God, and flung a fiery lustre across the heaving deep, Moses stood up to address the people. Their redemption was nigh. That darkest hour had come which ushers in the dawn. With his foot on the shore, the symbol of power in his hand, the fiery pillar lighting up his face, Moses pointed to the gloom where the Egyptians lay, and said, “The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.”

God's people are like his ancient Israel. They have enemies who will harass them in life, and follow them to the very shores of time; but whoever, or whatever these may be—sin, sorrow, poverty, temptations, trials, fears, doubts, Satan himself—oh! a death-bed shall be the death of them all. In leaving life we leave them

behind. Death is their destruction, not ours. And how should it reconcile us to that dark and doleful passage from which nature shrinks, that when we stand in its gloomy portal to take a last look at this fading world, we shall take our last look, not of friends in Christ—for we shall meet them again in heaven—but only of these our enemies. We “shall see them again no more for ever.” Pursuing God’s people to their very death-bed, Satan may harass them upon it. His time is short. It is his last chance. He knows it. Another day or hour, and they are out of his grasp; and so—summoning all his hellish powers—like the Egyptians who drove down into the sea—he follows the saint into the very depths of death—and aggravates by his horrible suggestions, the struggles of a dying hour. And now, in that time of darkness, the saint has two enemies upon him—death, and him that has the power of death, that is the devil. Be it so; God shall take off their chariot wheels; they reach not the other shore, nor set foot in heaven; there, there entereth nothing to hurt or to defile.

The dead enter into rest. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, they rest.” “He that is dead is free from sin.” And as in the chamber of death I have gazed on the calm and deep repose of the quiet sleeper, when the tossing arms are still, and the restless head lies on its pillow, and the features which have now lost all expression of pain, or passion, present an aspect of solemn, sublime, beautiful, perfect rest, I have sometimes thought, that this was an emblem which the soul

had left us of its own still more profound, perfect, heavenly rest.

This is what the redeemed escape *from*, but what they escape *to*—oh, the joys they enter on when they are with Christ, who can tell? We know that “to die” *is*—not shall be at a future time, and after some intermediate state—but “to die *is* gain,” gain immediate. One step—and, what a step!—the soul is in glory. Ere the wail has sunk in the chamber of death, the song of the upper sanctuary has begun. There is no delay; no waiting for an escort to travel that invisible, untrodden path. Angels unseen are moving in that chamber, looking on with tearless eyes where all else are weeping; and, the last breath out—the last quiver passed from the lip—and away, away, they are off with the spirit for glory. On angel’s wings the beggar is borne to Abraham’s bosom. And the shout of saints and angels, that greeted the conqueror, is still ringing amid the arches of heaven, when the door is again thrown open and the thief walks in. “This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” He leaves his cross, and direct, as on a summer evening I have seen a lark with outspread wings drop singing into her nest, he goes up singing to his crown.

And what and where is heaven? I cannot tell. To the eye of faith, heaven looks much like a star to the eye of flesh. Set there a gem on the brow of night, the star shines most bright—most beautiful; but separated from us by so great a distance as to be raised almost as high beyond our investigations as above the

storms and clouds of earth. A shining object, we see it gleaming in the fields of space, but we see nothing more, even when our eyes are assisted by the most powerful telescope. By what beings it is inhabited; what forms they have; what tongue they speak; what the character of the landscape in these upper worlds, we do not know; and perhaps never shall, till we have cast loose a body which, like an anchor, moors us to this earth, and with a soul unchained, free perhaps as thought—we are left to roam the universe, and pass, on the wings of a wish, from world to world of our Father's kingdom. Never, at least till then, shall we know either where heaven is, or what heaven is. The best description of it is to say that it is indescribable. Paul on his return attempted no other. There he “heard and saw things unutterable.” Nor does the matter cost us the least anxiety. If God spared not his own Son, heaven shall want nothing to make us supremely happy. It is enough for me to know that the home of the blessed—the palace of the Great King—has joys which eye never saw, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

III.—The complete blessedness of the saints at the resurrection in the restoration of all that sin forfeited.

There were periods in creation—progressive stages. Step by step the work advanced to its consummation. In creation, just as in conversion, the process began

with light—letting light in upon the darkness. God said, “Let there be light, and there was light, and the evening and the morning were the first day.” And then a wide-spread firmament of blue separates the waters above the earth from the waters beneath, and the work completed, the evening and the morning are the second day. The third day introduces a new epoch. The mountains raise their heads above the waters; like an infant the earth comes naked from the womb, and when God has wrapped his new born world in a beautiful robe of flowers, green fields, and waving forests, the evening and the morning are the third day. The heavens next are garnished, and when their boundless fields are sown with millions of stars, the evening and the morning are the fourth day. Thus the Creator goes on with his work. Each succeeding period brings it nearer to perfection, till, on the evening of the sixth day, as the sun was sinking behind the western hills, his slanting beams shone on our holy parents—their home a garden, their estate a world, the creatures all their servants; in their hearts no taint of sin, in their eyes no tear of sorrow, and on brows—too soon to be bathed in sweat, and blushing with shame—flashing crowns of innocence. Then, from the throne of his most excellent majesty, God looked on this world as it rolled away in its happy orbit, and, pronouncing all that he had made to be very good, “the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”

Like creation, the Gospel has had its periods of progress. It gradually advanced in its development from

the first promise given by God, when he, the judge, and the culprits man and the devil stood face to face upon the ruins of Eden. First we have a rude altar with the smoke of sacrifice curling up to the skies from earth's unbroken forests ;—none there but our two solitary parents, weeping, as well they might, when they gazed on the miserable wreck which they had made of their own and their children's fortunes ; yet, while they wept, lifting up their heads in hope of a coming redemption. The scene shifts, and next we have a desert with a mighty host scattered over its arid sands, and in their midst a tented sanctuary, up from which a cloud of incense goes floating, like a prayer, away to heaven. The scene shifts again, and Jerusalem sits upon her hills, and where hundreds of white-robed priests are serving, and thousands of worshippers are kneeling, a magnificent temple of marble, cedar, and gold, towers high over all—the ornament and palladium of the land. The scene shifts once more. It is mid-day, and yet dark ; smitten with fear, the earth is trembling, graves are yawning to let out their dead, and through the gloom of an unnatural eclipse, we behold the cross of Calvary with its bleeding victim. Son of God ! He is dying, “the just for the unjust.” He cries, “It is finished,” and, Saviour of the world, he expires. The work, so long ago begun, has reached its triumphant close. By the act of death he swallows up death in victory. And thus you see how, from one garden to another, from the bowers of Eden to the olives of Gethsemane, from the first promise to the final performance, redemption ad-

vances by successive steps. Jesus bows his head; and then once more from the throne of his most excellent majesty, God looks on all his work, and over the bloody cross and his own dead Son, pronounces this judgment, "Behold, it is very good." And ushering in an eternal Sabbath, the evening and the morning were the sixth day of redemption.

There yet remains an aspect of redemption in which it is not complete. The prince of this world is still out, and in the battle-field fighting—fighting like the devil he is for his kingdom. The body yet lies a captive in the tomb, and the grave must yield its ancient charge. Insatiate and insatiable devourer! thou robber of our pleasant homes! with thy black mouth ever opening, and thy cry "give, give, give," ever in our ear, thou thyself must give—thou must restore thy dead. The dust of saints is dear to Christ. He comes to claim it. All that death and Satan hold they must relinquish; all that Christ has purchased he shall possess. The soul wants her partner; and although the exile may return no more, nor see his native land, the redeemed shall come back to claim their bodies from the earth—aye, and claim the very earth they lie in. "The saints shall inherit the earth."

A grand and most noble destiny awaits our world. Purified by judgment fires, this earth shall be the home of the blessed. The curse, that lies upon its soil, shall pass away with sin. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree." Of the thorns of that curse Christ's

crown was woven, and he bore them off upon his head. Under laws accommodated to a new economy, this wide world shall become one smiling Eden, where, exempt from physical as from moral evils, none shall shiver amid arctic frosts, nor wither under tropic heat; these fields of snow and arid sands shall blossom all with roses. From the convulsions of expiring—or rather the birth-pangs of parturient nature—a new-born world shall come, a home worthy of immortals, a palace befitting its King. The blood that falling on Calvary dyed earth's soil shall bless it, and this ancient theatre of Satan's triumph shall be the seat of Emmanuel's kingdom, and the witness of his glory.

Then the saints shall inherit the earth. Some, like Abraham in the promised land, are poor wanderers here—the proprietors of nothing but a grave. Some own not even so much as that. Like the descendants of a noble but decayed house, we wander strangers on the soil which was once the property of our fathers. But the time of redemption draweth nigh. Man shall get his own again, and hold it by a charter written in the blood of his King. This world was our patrimonial estate. It was the land given to our fathers. And it seems most meet, that with the rank and title, the lands should come back to the old family; and, as forming the crowning triumph over sin and Satan, that our redemption should be altogether like that of Israel, when Moses turned round on Pharaoh, saying—"Not a hoof shall be left behind." Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER.

I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 36.

WHEN in a sultry summer day the sky gets overcast, and angry clouds gather thick upon its brow, and bush and brake are silent, and, the very cattle, like human beings, drawing close together, stand dumb in untasted pastures, and where there is no ripple on the lake, nor leaf stirring on the tree, all nature seems struck with awe, and stands in trembling expectation, then, when the explosion comes, and a blinding stream of fire leaps from the cloud, and, as if heaven's riven vault were tumbling down upon our head, the thunders crash, peal, and roar along the sky, he has neither poetry nor piety, nor sense, who does not reverently bow his head and assent to the words of David, "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

When the God of glory thundereth in nature, his voice is full of majesty; when, in still louder thunders, the God of providence speaks by calamities that alarm the nation, or shake to its foundations the happiness of our home, his voice is also full of majesty; and when the ear of faith listens to these august and lofty words, "I have spoken, and I will do it," the voice of the Lord

again "is full of majesty." The language is stamped with divinity; and with the highest propriety we may address to God the words which the flatterers of royalty blasphemously offered to an orator, whose proud assumption of divinity the worms soon refuted. The lie of their adulation to Herod changes to truth on our lips, when—speaking of him who says, "I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it"—we exclaim, "This is the voice of a God, and not of a man."

The words of my text fit not mortal lips. Of that averment, Jephthah's calamity and Herod's crime afford memorable illustrations. In the full tide of patriotism, and the fierce excitement of the fight, burning with a warrior's ambition to win the field, Jephthah made his vow, and resolved to keep it—to do what he spake. Ah! little did he dream that the first to leave his house, the victim for sacrifice, should be the daughter of his heart—his only child. And as little did Herod foresee, upon what a bloody path of remorse and crime the rash pledge extorted by the fiendish hatred of a paramour would lead him.

Often, we have not the power to do what we say, to perform what we promise. "If the Lord will," should qualify all our future. And even although the power were ours, some vows are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The language of my text therefore, belongs only to him whose glance penetrates eternity; to whose omniscience nothing is impervious, to whose power nothing is impossible. Weak, short-sighted, ignorant, erring mortals, such words in our

mouths were impudent and impotent presumption. We have no more right to assume the imperial tone of Divinity, than we have ability to launch his thunderbolts, or wisdom to guide his counsels.

These great words of power are also words of mercy. Connect them with the exceeding precious promises, the exceeding lofty offers of the Gospel, with such a passage as this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" or this, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" or this, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength made perfect in your weakness;" or this, "With my dead body shall they arise." "Awake and sing, all ye that dwell in the dust. For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead"—and these words are as full of mercy as of majesty. In them God speaks with absolute confidence. And how is his confidence calculated both to create and sustain in our hearts the firmest assurance that he can and that he will do all he says? He speaks "as one having authority." There is no dubiety about his language, or hesitancy in its tone. He speaks as one whose word is law, whose will is power, whose smile is life, whose frown is death. He speaks as one who has entire confidence in his own resources. He speaks as one whose word is as efficient now as on the day when he issued the creative fiat, and said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

Were you ever at sea in a storm, when the ship reeled to and fro like a drunken man, and struggling,

as for life in the arms of death, now rose on the top of the billow, now plunged into the trough of the sea? Partially infected with other's terror, did you ever leave shrieking women and pale men below, to seek the deck, and look your danger bravely in the face? In such circumstances, I know nothing so reassuring as—when we have staggered across the slippery planking, and are holding by rail or bulwark—to see amid these weltering foam wreaths, that fierce commotion, the hurricane roar of the wind among the shrouds, and the loud dash of the billows beneath, the calm confidence that sits on the brow of that weather-beaten man who with iron strength leans upon the wheel, and steers our ship through the roaring billows. Such—only much higher—is the confidence which we draw from the confidence of God, as expressed in the words—"I have spoken, and I will do it."

In illustration of this, take the night of the storm in Galilee. The disciples gather round our Lord, and wake him, crying, Master, Master, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Look up, and see these mountain waves! Hark to the roaring of the storm! the boat fills—we sink. Save, oh save, we perish! Had they known him fully, how would they have drawn courage from his very slumbers? With a boat-cloak protecting his wasted and weary form from the flying spray, they would have let him sleep on; and bold faith, arresting the arm of fear, had said, "Hush, wake him not; let him take his rest; were his disciples in danger he would not, he could not sleep."

When a mother, on her watch by the cradle where infant life has been feebly flickering, falls asleep, we are sure that the crisis is over—the worst is passed. Before sleep sealed these kind and anxious eyes, they had seen the tide, that had ebbed, returning. And let the storm wreck a hundred boats, and carry disaster, widowhood, orphanage among the fishing hamlets upon Galilee's shores, to my eye the disciples had full assurance of safety in the fact that Jesus slept—slept as soundly in that storm-tossed boat as when Mary rocked the cradle, or sung him over on her gentle bosom. In that sleeping form “there was the hiding of his power,” and the confidence of high and worthy faith. But my text is one that meets the lowest, weakest faith; for who can mark the firm, unqualified, determined, supreme, sovereign tone of the words, “I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it,” and doubt that God will make good all his promises. Man is often confident when he should be diffident; and yet, if the confidence of man inspires us with hope, and speaks peace to the apprehensions of a troubled heart, how much more should the confidence of God? With these words in our eye, we can look on the starry dome of heaven and this solid earth, and believe that sooner that vaulted roof shall fall, and crush the world, burying it in its ruins, than that one good word spoken of his people shall fail till all be fulfilled.

I. The text announces a most important truth.

So long as there was pulse and breath in Lazarus, his sisters had often left their brother's couch, and gone

to door and window to see if there was yet any sign of Jesus. Days ago a messenger had been dispatched with the tidings, "He whom thou lovest is sick;" and they felt like the mother of Sisera, when, wearying for her son's return, she looked for him in the glare of day, and listened for him in the gloom of night, crying, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?" Death at length quenches the last spark of hope. The funeral is over; and, when four days have elapsed, a lingering Lord is seen descending the heights of Olivet in his approach to Bethany. Hurriedly, one enters the house of mourning and whispers, "The Lord is come." Martha rises, and, advancing to meet him, she pours forth her regret for his absence, and her confidence in his power in this bitter cry, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

When we look at our text, we feel, in reference to the sad event of Eden, much as Martha did when she fixed her weeping eyes on Jesus. Would *his* presence have preserved the life of Lazarus? No less certainly had these words been present in their power to Eve, they would have protected her innocence and saved the world. Not Lazarus only, but no man had died; there had been neither sin, nor sorrow, nor griefs, nor graves, in this suffering world, had Eve, when she stood by the fatal tree, but remembered, believed, felt this sentence, "I have spoken, and I will do it." Then, on the serpent saying, "Thou shalt not surely die," with a voice as prompt and peremptory as her Son's, she had

replied, "Get thee behind me Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God." The honour reserved for her seed had been her own. She had placed her naked foot upon the serpent, and, stamping down a heel unbruised, had crushed the reptile's head. Oh, the world had been saved, had she, taking up her position on the high ground of my text, answered the tempter thus, "The Lord hath said, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. He hath spoken, and He will do it." Entrenched more strongly within these lines than ever army that behind batteries—bristling with cannon—beat back the fierce sortie, she had stood alone; within the impregnable barriers of God's mighty word, she had defied the allied powers of hell. Omnipotent in God, this woman had received the battle on her single shield. Eden had still been ours, and our family had still been blessed and holy, with God for their father and Paradise for a home.

Some years ago, when autumn floods wrought great devastation in our country, a strong man was swept away into the swollen river. It bore him—as he and others thought—by good fortune, to a tree, which stood bravely up amid the sea of waters. He caught it and climbed it. Seated on a bough, he stretched out his arms for help to the distant banks. Attempts were made to rescue him before nightfall, but all in vain. The day wore on, and the night at length came down; and now a frantic wife, and weeping little ones, and some kind neighbours, were left nothing to do, but to listen amid the pauses of the tempest for his long shrill

whistle. Ever and anon that signal came across the flood to cheer them up; he sounded it to let them know that he was still alive, and that the tree was yet breasting the impetuous stream. About midnight it ceased. They strained their ears, and heard nought but the sullen roar of the angry river, mingled with the shrieking of the storm. Morning at length arrived; the man was gone—tree gone—and where it stood they saw but the whirling waves of a red roaring flood. At this moment, one—considered little else than a fool—stepped forward to say, “I could have saved him.” Any other but that heart-broken group would have laughed him to scorn; and yet he shewed them how, by attaching a rope to a float, and sending that away from the very bank where the lost man had been carried off, he could have saved him, since the current that bore the man to the tree would have been certain to convey to him this means of communication with the shore. The plan was perfect; no doubt of it. But it came too late; and they had to leave the scene with their grief exasperated and embittered by the thought, that had they possessed but the wisdom of this fool, their desolate home had received a joyous family, to give God thanks for the “dead that was alive again, and the lost that was found.”

I have told you, that had my text been present to the mind and felt in its power by the heart of Eve, we had not been lost. But when the deed has been done, and it is now too late, my object is not to shew, how man might have been saved. There is little kindness in

telling me of a medicine that would have cured my dead. To tell me that had this or that been done, these arms and not the cold grave had held him, is not to close but open my wound—to drop not balm, but burning acid upon a raw and bleeding sore. Glory to the grace of God, I tell not that my text would have saved man, but, if believed in, still shall save him. It would have saved us from the grave. It can raise us out of it. It is like Jesus Christ. Had he been present, Lazarus had not died, but he who could have saved Lazarus from the tomb, when it has closed upon his friend, calls him out of it. The power that would have proved the sick man's remedy, 'stands there at the mouth of that yawning sepulchre the dead man's resurrection. Let my text lay hold of the redemption of Christ, and it has all, more than all the power it ever had. The cross, the crown, peace, pardon, grace in life, hope in death, heaven throughout all eternity—these are all wrapped up in a deep, solemn, heartfelt, divine conviction of this truth. “I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.”

Take, on the one hand, these precious invitations—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;” and this, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;” and this, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;” and this, “I will take out of you the hard and stony heart;” and this, “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and I will cause you to come up out of your

graves, and ye shall live ;” and take, on the other hand, these :—“ They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ;” and this, “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die ;” and this, “ The wicked shall be cast into hell.” Now, would God by his Spirit help us to lodge in men’s hearts an earnest, cordial belief of these truths as they appear in the light of the text, man would not—man could not be lost. At once warning and winning men, the Gospel would be glad news. Hearers with all their hearts would embrace its mercy. Churches would become sanctuaries ; the place of worship would be a gate to heaven ; nor would ministers—disheartened and despondent—have to return so often to their Master, saying, “ Lord, they are perishing ; yet they will not come to thee that they may have life. I have brought back thine offer. They will not take it. No man hath believed my report, and to none has the arm of the Lord been revealed.”

II. The comforts this truth imparts to a true Christian.

Through his confidence in this truth the believer commits all his earthly cares to God.

I do not say that we are not to embrace every opportunity, which providence may present, for improving our circumstances, and acquiring lawful objects of pursuit. Far from it. The Gospel inculcates diligence, even in our worldly calling. “ Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.” Nor will our lawful calling, whatever it be, interfere with the

best interests of our souls. Religion is none the worse, but all the better for work; and a man's work is all the better for his religion. The morning prayer does for a good man's heart what the morning meal does for his body. It braces him up for the day and its duties; its business and its battle. He has least need of a master's watchful eye, who feels that the eye of God is ever on him. You may safely trust those who make conscience of the meanest work; who, in kindling a fire or sweeping a floor, have an eye uplifted to the glory of God; who ennoble life's humblest employment by aiming at a noble end; and who address themselves to their business in the high and holy belief, that when duty—however humble it may be—is well done, God is glorified; just as he is glorified as well by a lowly daisy, as by the garden's gaudiest and proudest flower.

But while this truth gives no encouragement to indolence—to a languid and idle waiting upon providence—and no encouragement to cast our work itself on God, it teaches his people to cast the cares of their work upon him. Are not these among the words that he hath spoken, and will do, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "Cast thy burden on the Lord, he shall sustain thee." "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord?" Child of God! put in, then, a fearless hand into fortune's lottery, and draw thy fate. With faith in a superintending providence and an unfailing word, Child of God! shield thy heart from cares that are the torture of others, and from temptations that are often their ruin! Between

a man, torn with anxieties, tossed with fears, fretting with cares, and the good man, who calmly trusts in the Lord, Oh! there is as great a difference as between a brawling, roaring, mountain brook, that with mad haste leaps from crag to crag, and is ground into boiling foam, and the placid river, which, with beauty on its banks, and heaven in its bosom, spreads blessings wherever it flows, and pursues the noiseless tenor of its way back to the great ocean, from which its waters came. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

Through his confidence in the truth of my text, the believer is sustained amid the trials of life.

God visits his people with trials for the very same reason that the refiner casts his silver into the furnace. He tries them to purify them. He does not afflict willingly. Be assured that he has no more pleasure in your sufferings than a kind surgeon in his patient's groans, or a tender parent in his children's tears.

Trials, no doubt, are ill to bear. To be reduced from affluence to poverty—to become dependent on cold charity—to lie on a bed of languishing—to pass sleepless nights of pain—to be exposed to evil tongues—to be hissed on the stage where we were once applauded—to sit amid the ruins of fortune—to lay loved ones in a lonesome grave—such things are not "joyous, but grievous." Winter, no doubt, is not the pleasant

season that summer brings with her merry songs and wreaths of flowers, and long, bright, sunny days ; nor are bitter medicines savoury meat. Yet he who believes that all things shall work together for good, will be ready to thank God for physic as well as food ; and for the winter frost that kills the weeds, and breaks up the soil, as for the dewy nights and sunny days that ripen the fields of corn. May God give us such a faith ! With nature weak and grace imperfect, when there is no lifting of the cloud, and trials are severe and long protracted ! ah ! though it be easy for an onlooker to preach patience, it is not easy for a sufferer to practise it. In such circumstances, how prone we are to take the case out of God's hands, and, getting discontented with his discipline, how ready we are to cry, " How long, O Lord, how long ? " " If it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; " or, take away this, and give me any one else to drink. Yet let mine be a firm faith in the truth and love of God, let me be confident that he will do what he has said, and perform all that he has promised, and I can discover mercy's bow bent on fortune's blackest cloud, and, under most trying providences, shall enjoy in my heart, and exhibit to others in my temper, the blessed difference between a sufferer that mourns, and a sufferer that murmurs.

Through his confidence in the truth of my text, the believer cheerfully hopes, and patiently waits for heaven.

Home ! to be home is the wish of the seaman on the stormy sea and his lonely watch. Home is the wish

of the soldier, and tender visions mingle with the troubled dreams of trench and tented field. Where the palm-tree waves its graceful plumes, and birds of jewelled lustre flash and flicker among gorgeous flowers, the exile sits staring upon vacancy ; a far off country lies on his heart ; borne away on the wings of fancy over intervening seas and continents, he is again at home, and hears the lark singing above his father's fields, and sees his fair-haired boy brother, with light foot, and childhood's glee, chasing the butterfly by his native stream. And in his best hours, home, his own sinless home—a home with his Father above that starry sky—will be the wish of every Christian man. He looks around him—the world is full of suffering ; he is distressed by its sorrows, and vexed with its sins. He looks within him—and finds much corruption in his own heart to grieve for. And so he often turns his eye upwards, saying, “I would not live here alway.” No. Not for all the gold of the world's mines—not for all the pearls of her seas—not for all the pleasures of her flashing, frothy cup—not for all the crowns of her kingdoms—would I live here alway. Like a bird about to migrate to those sunny lands where no winter sheds its snows, or strips the grove, or chains the dancing streams, he will often be pruning his spirit's wing for the hour of his flight to glory.

The holier the child of God becomes, the more he pants after the perfect image and blissful presence of Jesus ; and dark although the passage, and deep although the waters be, the more holy he is, the more

ready is he to say, "It is better to depart and be with Jesus." "Tell me," said a saintly minister of the Church of England, whose star but lately set on this world, to rise and shine in brighter skies—"tell me," he said to his physician, "the true state of my case; conceal nothing;" adding, as his eye kindled, and his face beamed at the thought, "if you have to tell me that my dissolution is near, you could not bring happier or more welcome news."

Paul said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He judged it best for himself to go, but for others he held it best to stay. And there are few nobler sights than to see that man, with his foot on the door-step of heaven, return to throw himself into the very thick of battle, and spend and be spent in his Master's work. The crown of martyrdom often within his reach, he drew back a hand that was eager to grasp it. He took as much care of life as the coward-guilt that is afraid to die. So long as he could serve the cause of Jesus, he was not impatient of the hardships, wounds, and watchings of the warfare. It was sin, not suffering that he felt intolerable; it was that which rung from him the bitter cry, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" His a Saviour's spirit, he chose rather that Christ should be glorified through his labours on earth, than that he himself should be glorified with Christ in heaven. And so long as he had a tongue to speak for Jesus, and an arm to hold

high above the battle's tumult the banner of the faith, he was willing to work on—not impatient for death and his discharge. His was a higher and more heroic wish than to get to heaven. He wished to make a heaven of earth; and, persuaded that nothing could separate him from the love of God, or, finally, from heaven, believing that all which God had said of him he would do for him, and knowing that, though the vision tarried, it would come, he possessed his soul in patience and peace—waiting for the Lord.

It is a cowardly thing for a soldier to seek his discharge so long as his country's banner flies in the battle-field. The Christian should be a hero, not a coward; and with such faith as all may get, and many have enjoyed, God's people, while they look to heaven, will with patience wait for it. On his way home, the saint will prove himself a good Samaritan—ready to stop even on a heavenward journey, that he may raise the fallen, bind up the wounds of humanity, and do all the work that meets him upon the road. Nor shall this go unrewarded. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet." And, Oh! heaven shall be sweetest to him who has wrought through the longest day, and toiled the hardest at his work. Now and then, he may be lifting up a weary head to see how the hours wear by—if there be yet any sign of his Master coming; but upborne under the heat and burden of the day by the confidence that "he who shall come will come, and will not tarry," he works assiduously, and suffers patiently. The most importunate and urgent prayer he ventures on, that of one, who, trembling lest patience

should fail and religion suffer dishonour, cried, when her pain deepened into agony, and the agony became excruciating—"Come, oh come, Lord Jesus! come quickly."

III. Both nature and providence illustrate the truth of my text.

Nature assures us, that what God hath said, he will do.

It can never be wrong to do what Jesus did. That must be sound reasoning, in the use of which he sets us an example. I see him bring a flower to the pulpit, and choose a lily for his text. He bids the people listen to that sweet preacher—the little bird—that, seated on the bending spray, with providence for its song and sermon, neither sows nor reaps; without harvests, suffers no want; and without a barn, feels no fear. Thus he taught his hearers to cast their cares on God, and thus have I the highest authority for summoning Nature to this house that she may bear witness to the character of God. We ask her then to say, whether her God, who is our God, is true to his word? whether he ever says, and fails to do? By the voices of the sun, the stars, the hills, the valleys, the streams, the foaming cataracts, the rolling thunders, and the roaring sea, she returns a majestic answer. It is an echo of the text. Spring comes with the infant year waking in her arms; rosy Summer comes bedecked with a robe of flowers; brown Autumn comes with her swarthy brow, crowned with vines, and on her back the nodding sheaves of corn; old Winter comes with his

shivering limbs, and frozen locks, and hoary head ;— and these four witnesses—each laying one hand on the broad table of nature, and, lifting the other to heaven—swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that all which God hath said, God shall do.

No man looks for sunrise in the west. No soldier stands beneath the hissing shell expecting to see it arrested in its descent, and hanging like a star in empty space. We build our houses in confidence that the edifice will gravitate to the centre ; nor ever doubt, when we set our mill-wheel in the running stream, that as sure as man is on his way to the grave, the waters shall ever wend their way to the sea. We consult the Nautical Almanack, and, finding that it shall be high water to-morrow at such an hour, we make our arrangements for being then on board, certain that we shall find our ship afloat, and the seamen shaking out their sails to go away on the bosom of the flowing tide. If fire burned the one day, and water the next ; if wood became at one time heavy as iron, and iron at another as buoyant as wood ; if here the rivers hasted to the embraces of the sea, and there, as in fear, retreated from them, what a scene of confusion this world would become ! In truth, its whole business rests on faith—on our belief, that God will carry into unfailing effect every law which his finger has written in the volumes of nature and providence. This is the pillow on which a sleeping world rests its weary head ; this is the pivot on which its wheels of business turn. And now let us remember, that there are not two Gods ; a consistent

Divinity who presides over nature, and a capricious Divinity who presides in the kingdom of grace. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord." In regard, therefore, to all the promises and solemn warnings of the Bible, Nature lifts up her voice and cries in the words of the prophet—"O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the word of the Lord."

Providence assures us that what God hath said, he will do.

Some time ago the heavens were pouring down torrents of rain; and we passed through a district where the streams had risen into rivers, the rivers were swollen into seas, fields were changed into lakes, and boats were plying where ploughs were wont to go. It looked like the beginning of a second deluge; and to some who had fled from their beds for safety to cottage roofs, the howling of the wind, the incessant pouring of the rain, the waters steadily rising on the walls, may have recalled the memory of that day when the ark began to float, and men hung round it fiercely knocking on a door which God had shut in judgment against a wicked world. Yet, I will venture to say, that the dread of a second deluge aggravated no man's sufferings, nor changed one sinner's curses into a penitent's prayers. Why not? Ah! men say the sea has never left her bounds. Apart altogether from the records of revelation, geology tells us that she has, and that round the rock where now the eagle has her nest, monsters of the deep have swum, and that the highest peaks of earth's loftiest mountains were once the

islands of an ancient sea. Yes ! but then, it is said, there is the bow in the cloud, and the promise in the Bible, “ Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood ; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. This is the token of my covenant that I will make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” That indeed *is* a security against a second flood. And shall God keep his word to this doomed, sinful, polluted world—shall he keep the covenant of the bow, and not keep the covenant of the cross ? The providences of four thousand years assure us that he who is true to his covenant with Noah, shall not be less true to the blood-sealed covenant made with his beloved Son.

The voice of every storm that, like an angry child, weeps and cries itself asleep—the voice of every shower that has been followed by sunshine—the hoarse voice of ocean breaking in impotent rage against its ancient bounds—the voice of the seasons as they have marched to the music of the spheres in unbroken succession over the earth—the scream of the satyr in Babylon’s empty halls—the song of the fisherman, who spreads his net on the rocks, and shoots it through the waters where Tyre once sat in the pride of an ocean queen—the fierce shout of the Bedouin as he careers in freedom over his desert sands—the wail and weeping of the wandering Jew over the ruins of Zion—in all these I hear the echo of this voice of God, “ I the Lord have spoken, and I

will do it." These words are written on every Hebrew forehead. The Israelite bartering his beads with naked savages—bearding the Turk in the capital of Moham-medan power—braving in his furs the rigour of Russian winters—overreaching in China the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire—buying diamonds in Golconda—and in our metropolis of the commercial world standing highest among her merchant princes—the Hebrew everywhere, yet everywhere without a country; with a religion, but without a temple; with wealth, but without honour; with ancient pedigree, but without ancestral possessions; with no land to fight for, nor altars to defend, nor patrimonial fields to cultivate; with children, and yet no child playing under the trees that his grandsire planted; belonging to a race, who are floating about over the world like scattered fragments of a wreck upon the bosom of the ocean—he is a living evidence, that what the Lord hath spoken, the Lord will do.

True to his threatenings, thy God, believer, shall be true to all his promises; and to both we may apply these lofty words of Balaam—"Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it, hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

THE NATURE, NECESSITY, AND POWER OF PRAYER.

I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for
them.—EZEKIEL xxxvi. 37.

IN pursuing his voyage to the shores of the New World the seaman steers southward. His object is to catch the trade wind. It blows so steadily from east to west, that having once caught it in his sails he has often nothing else to do. With his ship's head set westward, he is borne steadily along beneath a brilliant sun, and gently wafted over a summer sea. His voyage is one extended, happy holiday. The thrilling cry of land comes at length from the outlook on the topmast; and he drops his anchor in some quiet bay of those lovely islands, where the waves wash coral strands, and the breezes that blow seaward from the spicy forests, come loaded with delicious perfumes.

It is not thus man reaches the shores of heaven. That landing may be a picture of his arrival—the voyage is not. In yonder vessel, which enters the harbour with masts sprung, sails in rags, bulwarks gone, bearing all the marks of having battled with storms and ridden many a crested wave, and on her deck a crew of weather-

beaten and worn men, happy and glad to reach the land again—behold the plight in which the believer arrives at heaven. It is hard work to get there? No doubt of it. Paul, the man, in labours more abundant—Paul, the martyr, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his countrymen, by the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, on the sea—Paul, the patient sufferer for Christ, of a life of weariness, and painfulness, and watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness—even Paul stood alarmed, lest he himself should be a castaway. “The righteous scarcely are saved.” The busiest in praying, watching, working, fighting, are no more than saved. Oh then, “if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the wicked appear?”

My text summons you to prayer. But does any man think, that by repeating a daily prayer—learned long ago perhaps at his mother’s knee, reading, as a task, some verses of scripture, abstaining, as a trial, from grosser sins, attending church on Sabbath, and the Lord’s table on communion days, he is by such a smooth and easy way to reach the kingdom, and receive its crown? What says our Lord? “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” It is the prize of men who are valiant in faith and strong in prayer—men like those who, at bugle sound or flare of rocket, rush from the trenches, and springing into the deadly breach—leaping into the very

mouth of death—fight their way on and up till their flag of victory waves above the smoke of battle.

Or take Paul's figure of the energies and activities of the Christian life. Look at these two men, stripped to the skin, who stand face to face, confronting each other in the public arena. They have been in training for weeks and months. Strangers to the pleasures of ease and sweets of luxury, they have been on foot every day by the dawn. Abstaining from all indulgences which might enervate their frame, in hard bed, dry food, severe work, they have endured every trial which could develope their muscles, and add to their physical strength. And now these athletes are met to contend for the prize; foot touches foot, eyes watch eyes, and their spare but sinewy and iron forms are disrobed, that nothing may impede the lightning rapidity of their movements, or lessen the power of the stroke. The signal is given. Blows fall thick as hail; and now the candidates are rolling on the ground; now they emerge from a cloud of dust to continue the fight, till one,—planting a tremendous stroke on the head of his antagonist—stands alone in the arena, and amid applauses that rend the sky and waken up the distant echoes, holds the field. At this moment Paul steps forward, and, addressing Christians, says, So fight; so win. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."

Woe to the man, in these old games, who allowed his competitor to catch him off his guard. Woe to

the man who turned to look on father, mother, wife, or mistress. Woe to the man who lifted his eye but for a moment from the glaring eyeball of his antagonist; that moment a ringing blow fells him to the earth—he bites the dust.

Not less does our safety depend on constant prayer and watchfulness. “Be instant in prayer.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Watch and pray.” Ah! you will never have to offer Satan an advantage twice. Should he catch you asleep, as David found Saul—when he put aside the spear that gleamed in the moonlight above the unconscious sleeper, and whispered to Abishai, “Destroy him not”—Satan will not be satisfied with carrying off spear and water cruse, or skirt of robe. He will not be content to prove how you were in his power, and that, like a noble enemy who declines to take advantage of a sleeping man, he had generously left you your peace and piety. Constant prayer, unceasing watchfulness, these are what your interests imperatively demand. It is these the Christian life requires, and these the crown of redemption rewards. Observe how in my text God hangs all the blessings of salvation upon prayer. He says—as it were—I have had pity upon sinners; I have provided pardon for the guilty, justification through the righteousness, and life through the death of my Son; I have engaged to take away the heart of stone and replace it with one of flesh; I have promised my Spirit to sanctify, sufficient grace, a certain heaven—all these blood-bought, gracious, happy, holy blessings shall be yours, freely yours; yet not yours, unless they are

sought in prayer. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

In directing your attention to prayer, let me notice—

I. Nature herself teaches us to pray.

Like our intuitive belief in the existence of the soul, or in man's responsibility, there seems to be lodged in every breast, what I may call an instinct to pray, and an intuitive belief in the efficacy of prayer. Prayer must be natural, for it is universal. Never yet did traveller find a nation upon earth but offered prayers in some form or other to some demon or god. Races of men have been found without raiment, without houses, without manufactures, without the rudiments of arts, but never without prayers; no more than without speech, human features, or human passions. Prayer is universal, and seems to be as natural to man as the instinct which prompts an infant to draw the milk of a mother's bosom, and by its cries to claim a mother's protection. Even so man is—as it were instinctively—moved to cast himself into the arms of God, to seek divine help in times of danger, and in times of sorrow to weep on the bosom of a Father who is in heaven.

Nature and necessity have wrung prayers even from an atheist's lips.

There was a celebrated poet, who was an atheist—or at least professed to be so. According to him there was no God. Very strange. A rude heap of bricks and timber shot from a cart upon the ground was never

seen to arrange itself into the doors, stairs, chambers, and chimneys of a house. The dust and filings on a brassfounder's table have never been known to form themselves into the wheels and mechanism of a watch. The types loosely flung from the founder's mould never yet fell into the form of a poem, such as Homer, or Dante, or Milton would have constructed. The rudest hut of Bushmen, the Indian's simple canoe—fashioned by fire from a forest tree, the plainest clay urn, in which savage affection had enshrined the ashes of the dead, were never supposed to owe their form to the hands of chance. Yet this man believed (if it is possible to think so), that nature's magnificent temple was built without an architect, her flowers of glorious beauty were coloured without a painter, and her intricate, complicated, but perfect machinery constructed without an intelligent mind. According to him there was no God—the belief in a God was a delusion, prayer a base superstition, and religion but the iron fetters of a rapacious priesthood. So he held when sailing over the unruffled surface of the *Ægean* Sea. But the scene changed; and, with the scene, his creed. The heavens began to scowl on him; the deep uttered an angry voice, and, as if in astonishment at this God-denying man, “lifted up his hands on high.” The storm increased, till the ship became unmanageable. She drifted before the tempest. The terrible cry, “breakers a-head!” was soon heard; and how they trembled to see death seated on the horrid reef—waiting for his prey! A few moments more, and the crash comes. They are whelmed in the devouring

sea? No. They were saved by a singular providence. Like apprehended evils, which in a Christian's experience, often prove to be blessings, the wave, which flung them forward on the dreaded reef, came on in such mountain volume as to bear and float them over into the safety of deep and ample sea-room. But ere that happened, a companion of the atheist—who, seated on the prow, had been taking his last regretful look of heaven and earth, sea and sky—turned his eyes down upon the deck, and there, among papists, who told their beads and cried to the virgin, he saw the atheist prostrate with fear. The tempest had blown away his fine-spun speculations like so many cobwebs. He was on his knees, imploring God for mercy. In that hour—in that terrible extremity—Nature rose up in her might, asserted her supremacy, vindicated the claims of religion, smote down infidelity by a stroke, and bent the stubborn knees of atheism in lowliest prayer.

Danger may thus extort prayer; it does not follow that God will accept it. How can a man expect to have prayers accepted which are only wrung from him by the hand of danger or the fear of death? Let us translate their language? Is it not this? I will serve my lusts as long as I dare. So long as I can say it safely, I will say—Evil be thou my good; my vices, be ye my gods; I will turn to religion when I can do no better. Does Jesus stand at my door? are his locks wet with the dews of night? are his limbs weary standing? is his hand weary knocking? Till another hand is knocking there—the loud impatient hand of death—

Jesus comes not in. "What have I to do with thee, thou Son of God?" With thy religion—"Art thou come to torment me before the time?" "Go thy way at this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

In the name of reason, religion, gratitude, love, is this the treatment which a Saviour deserves? Ungrateful deluded sinner! "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Beware! What if he should mete out to thee the measure thou metest out to him? Even this—"I have spoken, and ye have not heard; I have called and ye have not answered; when ye speak I will not hear; when ye call, I will not answer. I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

II. Some difficulties connected with this duty.

The decrees of God, say some, render prayer unnecessary, useless. Are not all things, they ask, fixed by these decrees—irrevocably fixed? By prayer I may, indeed, prevail on a man to do a thing which he has not previously resolved not to do, and even although he should have so resolved—man is changeable; and I may shew him such good reasons for doing it, as to change his resolution. But if an immutable God has foreseen and fore-settled everything by an eternal and irreversible decree, what purpose can prayer serve? Who shall change the unchangeable? Thus men have argued, saying—"What profit shall we have if we should pray unto him?"

It were not difficult to expose the fallacy of this reasoning. The objection may be entirely answered. We might shew that the decrees of God embrace the means as well as the end; and since prayer is a means of grace, being a means to an end, it must be embraced within these very decrees, and cannot be excluded by them. I content myself, however, with simply remarking, that this objection is not honestly, at least not intelligently, entertained by any man. For, if the objection is good against prayer, is it not good against many things besides? If it stops action in the direction of prayer—if it arrests the wheels of prayer—it ought to stop the wheels of our daily business. If it is valid against prayer, it is an equally good objection to ploughing, sowing, taking meat or medicine, and a thousand other things. Might not an unwilling or indolent husbandman in spring, with as much propriety ask, what is the use of sowing? Has not God ordained everything? If I am to have a harvest—if he has decreed a harvest for my farm—then, although no ploughshare turn up a furrow, nor sower walk its fields, they shall wave in autumn with golden corn. Or might not one, who sickens at the sight of nauseous drugs, as well say, Take these away, I'll drink no more of them? Has not God ordained everything? Can a sparrow fall to the ground without the Father? If he has decreed that I am to live, come cholera, fever, pestilence, I shall live; if he has decreed otherwise, all the medicines of the apothecary, and the skill of science cannot avail to save me—cannot add one grain to the sands of my existence.

Did any man in his sober senses ever reason so? With that simple question we dismiss this objection.

Others, more earnest and honest, reading that "without faith it is impossible to please God," reading—and misunderstanding what they read—"he who doubteth is damned" say that from want of faith, their prayers must be useless. Most false reasoning! What says the Apostle?—"I will that men pray everywhere." "God will have all men to be saved." Like little children, we take the simple word, nor trouble ourselves with the metaphysics of the question.

If you were sufficiently alive to your danger, oh, these difficulties would have no more power to hold you than the meshes of a spider's web. I knew of one who, while wandering along a lonely and rocky shore at the ebb of tide, slipped his foot into a narrow crevice. Fancy his horror on finding that he could not withdraw the imprisoned limb! Dreadful predicament! There he sat, with his back to the shore, and his face to the sea. Above his head sea-weed and shells hung upon the crag—the too sure signs that when yonder turning tide comes in, it shall rise on him inch by inch, till it washes over his head. Did he cry for help? Cry for help! Who dreams of asking such a question? True, none heard him. But, how he shouted to the distant boat! how his heart sank as her yards swung round, and she went off on the other tack! how his cries sounded high above the roar of breakers! how bitterly he envied the white sea-mew her wing, as, wondering at this intruder on her lone domains, she sailed above his head, and shrieked back

his shriek ! how, hopeless of help from man, he turned up his face to heaven, and cried loud and long to God ! All that God only knows. But as sure as there was a terrific struggle, so sure, while he watched the waters rising inch by inch, these cries never ceased till the wave swelled up, and washing the dying prayer from his lips, broke over his head with a melancholy moan.

There was no help for him. There is help for us, although fixed in sin as fast as that man in the rock. Whether we have true faith, may be a question which is not easily settled ; but to pray is a clear and commanded duty. The “help, oh, help, Lord,” never yet rose from an anxious heart, but it rose to be heard, and accepted in heaven. And if Satan bids me hold my peace—as the disciples bade the blind man—I bid him hold his own. I refuse to be silent ; I but cry the louder, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” In God’s hands, when he is smiting, let me be “dumb, opening not the mouth.” In my Father’s arms, I may lie and do nothing but weep—weep upon his loving bosom ; but in the arms of this mortal and malignant and infernal enemy, who has seized me, and carries me off to prison and pit—a lamb bleating in the lion’s jaws—“I will cry unto the Lord, and he will answer me, and send help from above, and deliver me.”

III. Prayer must be earnest.

The public become suspicious even of good money when coiners have pushed their base metal into wide

circulation. Even so, religion falls into disrepute, and the character of piety suffers in the eyes of the world, when the church swarms with pretenders and false professors. And in like manner, the value of prayer has fallen in the eyes of men in consequence of many prayers which are offered being rejected by God; rejected, because they are not genuine. Hence prayer comes to be held in light esteem, and — if I might so speak — the bills drawn on the bank of heaven being dishonoured, man says — “Who is the Lord that I should serve him, or what profit shall I have if I pray unto him?”

Among other gross and venal impieties, the Church of Rome sells prayers. By her prayer market she converts God’s house into a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. Her prayers — although their price, like that of other goods, varies with the locality — may be bought for money, under this general rule of the market, that the praying shall correspond to the paying. The rude Tartar saves his money by a practice that achieves the object just as well, or rather that fails as completely to do anything but deceive the blind. He cuts a cylinder from a block of wood. Upon its surface he writes a series of prayers; and then he runs an axle through the cylinder, and fitting it up so that it shall keep turning like a mill-wheel in the running stream, he sets it in motion. He goes away on his hunt, to the pursuit of war, business, or pleasure, and reckons that, whether he sleeps or wakes, as the wheel goes round, and the prayers in its revolution turn up to the eye of the skies, heaven reads them there, and God

accepts the prayers of the dead cylinder for the desires of a living heart.

Prayers without wishes are like birds without wings ; the eagle soars away to heaven, but these never leave the ground. It is the heart that prays—not the knees, nor the hands, nor the lips. Have not I seen a dumb man, who stood with his back to the wall, beg as well with his imploring eye and open hand, as one that had a tongue to speak ? If you would have your prayers accepted, they must be arrows shot from the heart. None else reach the throne of God. You may repeat your prayers every day ; you may be punctual as a Mohammedan who, at the Mollah's call from the minaret of the mosque, drops on his knees in the public assembly or crowded street. What then ? The prayer of the lip, of the memory, of the wandering mind in its dead formality, is, in God's eyes, of no more value than the venal prayers of Rome, or the revolutions of the Tartar's wheel. "The sacrifice of the hypocrite is an abomination to the Lord."

Would you see true prayer—would you know what prayer really is ? Step into this Egyptian palace where Benjamin stands bound—his amazed and trembling brothers grouped around the lad. Judah advances. He bows himself before Joseph. His heart is full. His lip trembles. The tear glistens in his manly eye ; and now, with tenderness thrilling in every tone, he pours forth this plea of surpassing pathos—"Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against

thy servant : My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother ? and we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one ; and his brother is dead ; and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him." Thus on he goes ; every sentence passing like a knife into Joseph's heart. And then he closes and crowns his appeal with this most brave and generous proposal, " Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondsman to my lord ; for how shall I go to my father, and the lad be not with me, lest I see the evil that shall come on my father ? " Joseph's heart, which has been swelling with emotion, is now ready to burst. He can stand it no longer ; nor any wonder. That is prayer ; and could we bring such earnestness to Jesus, oh, how would his tender, much more tender heart melt, like wax, before it. Did we approach him with the fervour that glowed and burned in Judah's speech ; did we plead for our own souls or those of others, with such tears, in such tones, as Judah's when he pled for Benjamin, how would a divine brother discover himself to us.

Turn now from that Egyptian to this Hebrew palace. There also is prayer. Two women stand before King Solomon. In the darkness of the night one has crept, with noiseless step, to her neighbour's bed, and while the mother slept, and the babe slept in her bosom, softly, cautiously, she steals the living child, and leaves her own cold, dead infant in its place. They carry the dispute to Solomon—each claiming the living, each repudiating the

dead. With a skill that earned him his world-wide fame, the king summons nature as a witness. Horrible to hear, he commands the living child to be divided. The sword is raised—another moment, and each mother gets a quivering half—another moment, and interference comes too late. One stands firm, hard, collected, looking on with a cruel eye. With a bound that carries her to his feet, and a shriek that rings wild and high over all the palace, the other clasps her hands in agony and cries—“Oh, my lord, give her the living child, in no wise slay it.” That again is prayer. That cry, that spring, that look of anguish—all these proclaim the mother. How different these from the cold, callous, unimpassioned frame in which, alas, the best too often present themselves at the throne of grace, as if when we are seeking pardon, it were a matter of supreme indifference, whether our prayer were or were not answered. Oh! how should we pray that God would help us to pray, and touch our icy lips with a live coal from off his altar.

IV. Prayer is powerful.

An angel, says our great poet, keeping ward and watch on the battlements of heaven, caught sight of Satan as he sailed on broad wing from hell to this world of ours. The celestial sentinel shot down like a sunbeam to the earth, and communicated the alarm to the guard at the gates of paradise. Search was made for the enemy, but for a time without success. Itluriel at length entered the bower, whose flowery roof “showered

roses which the morn repaired," and where our first parents, "lulled by nightingales, embracing slept." There a toad was sitting squat by the ear of Eve. His suspicions were awakened. In his hand he bore a spear that had the celestial power of revealing truth, unmasking falsehood, and making all things to stand out in their genuine colours. He touched the reptile with it. That instant the toad—which had been breathing horrid dreams into the woman's ear—changed its shape, and there, confronting him face to face, stood the proud, malignant, haughty form of the Prince of Darkness.

With such a spear as that with which Milton, in this flight of fancy, arms Ithuriel, prayer arms us. Are we in doubt whether a thing is right or wrong? Are we indulging in pleasures, or engaged in pursuits with which we are not altogether satisfied, and yet are not prepared decidedly to condemn, and promptly to abandon? In any matter of Christian morals, are we halting between two opinions? The simplest and shortest way of determining the doubt is to apply the test of prayer. Take the subject to God. Look at your pleasures and your practices in the light of his countenance. Examine the matter on your knees. Can you make it a subject of prayer? Ah! be sure you are not safe in the place to which you cannot ask God to accompany you. Be sure that that good (as the world may call it), is bad—that pursuit or enjoyment, however gainful or pleasant, is an evil—upon which you cannot implore his blessing, for which you dare not go to a throne of grace, and give God thanks.

Is this test of universal application? Is everything to be made a subject of prayer? Certainly. So thought Fowell Buxton, even of those amusements with which, in holiday times, he was wont to brace up mind and body for noble labours in the cause of God and his country. So thought that Corsican patriot, who never went down to battle till he had gone down to his knees, nor ever levelled a rifle, that never missed, without praying for the soul he was about to send into eternity. And so speaks Paul, when linking peace and prayer together, he writes—"Be careful for nothing; but in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and minds, through Jesus Christ."

Such is one of the indirect uses, and not unimportant effects of prayer. But what say we of its direct power? It is in a sense omnipotent. Prayer moves the hand that moves the universe. It secures for the believer the resources of Divinity. What battles has it not fought! what victories won! what burdens carried! what wounds healed! what griefs assuaged! Prayer is the wealth of poverty; the refuge of affliction; the strength of weakness; the light of darkness. It is the oratory that gives power to the pulpit; it is the hand that strikes down Satan, and breaks the fetters of sin; it turns the scales of fate more than the edge of the sword, the craft of statesmen, or the weight of sceptres; it has arrested the wing of time,

turned aside the very scythe of death, and discharged heaven's frowning and darkest cloud in a shower of blessings.

Prayer changes impotence into omnipotence. Commanding the resources of Divinity, there is nothing it cannot do, and there is nothing it need want. It has just two limits. The first is, that its range is confined to the promises; but within these, what a bank of wealth, what a mine of mercies, what a store of blessings! The second is, that God will grant or deny our requests as he judges best for his own glory and our good. And who that knows how we are, in a sense, but children, would wish it otherwise? My little child is angry when I pluck a knife from his hands; he doubts his father's love because he does not always kiss, but sometimes corrects him; and turning away his head from the nauseous drug, he must be coaxed—sometimes compelled to drink the cup which, although bitter to the taste, is the restorative of health. Who that sees the child seek meat when he needs medicine, eagerly clutch at tempting but unripe fruit, prefer play, and go weeping to school, reject simple, but healthful fare, for some luscious but noxious luxury, who, I say, does not feel thankful that God reserves to himself the right of refusal, and suits his answers to our wants rather than to our wishes? Possibly, this limit to prayer may make poverty our lot; may bind us to a sickbed; may leave us to suffer and bleed under the stroke of an impending calamity; but—while we will get as much of earth as we need on earth—for the pardon of sin, for peace of conscience, for

purity of heart, for growth in grace, for all that we need to make us meet for heaven, and at length for ensuring heaven itself, prayer secures to us the heart of Love and the hand of Omnipotence.

By prayer, besides, God's children can reckon on immediate assistance. Prayer flies where the eagle never flew ; and rises on wings broader and stronger than an angel's. It travels further and faster than light. Rising from the heart of a believer, it shoots away beyond that starry sky, and, reaching the throne, enters into the ear of God. So soon, indeed, as the heart begins to work on earth, it moves the hand of God in heaven ; and, ere the prayer has left the lips of faith, Jesus has presented it to his Father, and secured its answer. It is a telegraph stretched not between shore and shore—the mother country and her distant colonies, the provinces and the metropolis, the seat of government and the far off scene of battle—but its extended lines connect heaven and earth, man and God, the sinner and the Saviour, the humblest home of piety and a throne of grace. That high invention of human genius, which, by its wires of iron connects distant countries, and has, in a sense, abolished both time and space—offers but an imperfect image of a power which piety has been working before science was born—nay, ever since the world began. From remote regions the electric telegraph may convey to a father the tidings that his child has been struck with disease ; but it carries not the physician to his side, nor the drug of potent virtue which could cure his malady. It leaves him to die. The telegraph may

bring to-night a detail of the fortunes of the war. Along it our army may send a cry for help—for more men and more munitions; but days and weeks must elapse, and many miles of ocean be travelled, ere our fleets can pour their bayonets on the hostile shore; and then it may be too late; the tide has ebbed that, taken at the full, had led on to fortune.

But does God never make his people wait? He does. Faith and patience are put upon their trial; there is no answer, nor relief. God is silent, and the church is left to cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" All true. Jesus addresses his Bride in the language he of old used to his mother, "Woman, my hour is not yet come." But let us need present help, and you shall see that he is "a very present help in time of trouble." Let the disciple, sinking amid the waves of Galilee, be crying, "I perish"—let the prophet be on his knees in the depths of the sea and the dark belly of the whale—let the widow's last mite, and the barrel's last handful have come—let the confessor be descending into the lions' roaring den—let the queen have her brave hand upon the door, with these words of high resolve upon her lips, "If I perish, I perish"—let the trembling host have the waters of the Red Sea foaming in their front, and the chariots of Egypt pressing on their rear—let God's people have reached such a crisis—let them stand in any such predicament—and his answer anticipates their prayer. The supply is on the road before the want is expressed; the door opens before the hand has struck it; while prayer is travel-

ling up the one line, the answer is speeding down the other. Hear the word of the Lord, "It shall come to pass; *before* they call I will answer, and while they are *yet* speaking, I will hear."

V. Prayer is confident.

In speaking of our Lord, Paul says, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him;" "Jesus, our High Priest, has entered within the veil, and having reconciled us to God, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let, us, therefore, come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

It is easy to know the knock of a beggar at one's door. Low, timid, hesitating, it seems to say, I have no claim on the kindness of this house; I may be told I come too often; I may be treated as a troublesome and unworthy mendicant; the door may be flung in my face by some surly servant. How different, on his return from school, the loud knocking, the bounding step, the joyous rush of the child into his father's presence, and, as he climbs his knee, and flings his arms round his neck, the bold face and ready tongue with which he reminds

his father of some promised favour? Now, why are God's people bold? Glory to God in the highest! To a Father in God, to an elder brother in Christ, Faith conducts our steps in prayer; therefore, in an hour of need, bold of spirit, she raises her suppliant hands, and cries up to God, "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and come down."

I think I see a sneer curling on the sceptic's lip as he says, How absurd! What presumption! as if it were not below the dignity of the Supreme Divinity to come at king's or peasant's, prince's or pauper's call. Should the lofty purposes of the Eternal be shaped by your petitions? Creature of a day, child of the dust! what are you that the universe should be steered—its helm moved this or that way for your sake? Well, no doubt the language is bold; yet with God a Father, our Father, my Father in Christ, I feel that I can be bold and confident in prayer. I know a father's heart. Have I not seen the quivering of a father's lip, the tear start into his eye, and felt his heart in the strong grasp of his hand, when I expressed some good hope of a fallen child? Have I not seen a mother, when her infant was tottering in the path of mettled coursers, with foam spotting their necks, and fire flying from their feet, dash like a hawk across the path, and pluck him from instant death? Have I not seen a mother, who sat at the coffin-head, pale, dumb, tearless, rigid, terrible in grief, spring from her chair, seize the coffin which we were carrying away, and, with shrieks fit to pierce a heart of stone, struggle to retain her dead?

And if we, that are but worms of the earth, will peril life for our children, and, when they are mouldered into dust, cannot think of our dead, nor visit their cold and lonesome grave, but our hearts are wrung, and our wounds bleed forth afresh, can we adequately conceive or measure, far less exaggerate—even with fancy at its highest strain, the paternal love of God? Talk not of what you suppose to be the dignity of Divinity. Talk not of the calm, lofty, dignified demeanour which becomes a king, who sees his child borne off on the stream that sweeps his palace wall. The king is at once sunk in the father. Divesting himself of his trappings—casting away sceptre, robe of gold, and jewelled crown, he rushes forth to leap into the boiling flood. Lives there a father with heart so dead as, at the sight of a child fallen overboard, and struggling with death, would not back every sail, and whatever might be the mission on which his ship was bound, whatever the peril he ran, would not put up her helm, and steer for the waves where his boy was sinking?

Child of God! pray on. God's people are more dear to him than our children are or can be to us. He regards them with more complacency than all the shining orbs of that starry firmament. They were bought at a price higher than would purchase the dead matter of ten thousand worlds. He cares more for his humblest, weakest child, than for all the crowned heads and great ones of earth. He takes a deeper interest in the daily fortunes of a pious cottage than in the fall and rise of kingdoms.

Child of God! pray on. By prayer thy hand can

touch the stars, thy arm stretch up to heaven. Nor let thy holy boldness be dashed by the thought that prayer has no power, to bend these skies, and bring down thy God. When I pull on the rope which fastens my frail and little boat to a distant and mighty ship, my poor strength may not draw its vast bulk to me, but I draw myself to it—to ride in safety under the protection of its guns, and enjoy in want the fulness of its stores. And it equally serves my purpose, and supplies my needs, that prayer, although it were powerless to move God to me, moves me to God. If he does not descend to earth, I ascend to heaven.

Child of God! pray on. Were it indispensable for thy safety that God should rend these heavens, it should be done—a wondering world should see it done. I dare believe *that*; and “I am not mad, most noble Festus.” Have not these heavens been already rent? Eighteen hundred years ago, robed in humanity, God himself came down. These blue skies, where only larks now sing and eagles sail, were cleft with the wings and filled with the songs of his angel train. Among the ancient orbs of that firmament, a stranger star appeared, travelling the heavens, and blazing on the banner borne before the King, as he descended on this dark and distant world. On Canaan’s dewy ground—his lowly bed—the eye of morning saw the shape and form of the Son of God; and dusty roads, and winter snows, and desert sands, and the shores and very waves of Galilee, were impressed with the footprints of the Crèator. By this manger, where the kingly babe lies cradled—beside this cross

upon whose ignominious arms the glory of the universe is hung—by this silent sepulchre, where, wrapped in bloody shroud, the body reposes on its bed of spices, and while Roman sentinels walk their moonlit round, Death—a bound captive—sits within, so soon as the sleeper wakes, to be disarmed, uncrowned, and in himself have death put to death—Faith can believe all that God has revealed, and hope for all that he has promised. Reading on that manger, on that cross, deeply lettered on that rocky sepulchre, these glorious words—“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Faith lifts an eagle eye to heaven, and rising to the boldest flights, soars aloft on the wings of prayer—

Faith, bold faith, the promise sees,
And trusts to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says it shall be done.

THE END.

File 7

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 MAR 1948
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 SEP 03 1996
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